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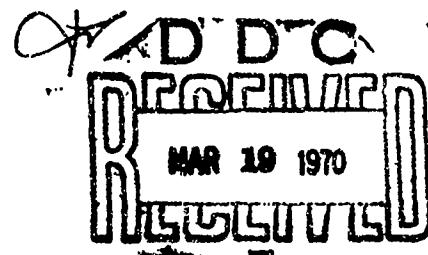
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## CASTRO-COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN VENEZUELA

A Study of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency Operations  
and Techniques in Venezuela, 1960 - 1964

SECTION I - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SECTION II - DISCUSSION



Georgetown Research Project  
Atlantic Research Corporation  
Alexandria, Virginia

Superseded  
AD-460173  
and  
AD-702161

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**SECTION I**

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

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## I. EVOLUTION OF THE CASTRO-COMMUNIST INSURGENCY

1. The Insurgency Background. Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela is the work of the Venezuelan Communist Party (est. 30-40,000 membership) and a smaller Castroite organization, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). The insurgents draw the bulk of their following from Caracas and other large cities. They operate in a physical setting that contains mountain regions suitable for guerrilla activity. Venezuelan society is characterized by serious socio-economic problems on which the insurgents can capitalize: notably a high rate of unemployment and mass poverty in an oil-rich nation. The political history of Venezuela is largely one of dictatorships and numerous civilian and military insurrections.

Venezuela ousted its most recent dictator in January 1958 and passed under the rule of democratic governments which have improved the socio-economic condition of broad sectors of the national society, maintained a high degree of civil liberty, and kept up good relations with the professional military. The insurgency in Venezuela is thus a contest between a Castro-Communist minority and a Latin American democracy which, in the words of President Rómulo Betancourt, is seeking to demonstrate "that even while defending itself, democracy can grow and expand to meet the needs and aspirations of the people."

2. The First Insurgent Attempt at Rapid Victory. Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela opened in October-November 1960 with riots in Caracas and a futile call for a revolutionary general strike against the Betancourt Government. Failure of these initiatives led the insurgents to evolve a five-stage plan for "rapid victory" which envisaged a Castro-Communist takeover of Venezuela about the end of 1962. The plan called for the insurgency to be waged mainly in the cities, especially Caracas, where victory would be won through a combination of street violence, terrorism, and uprisings by military garrisons won over to the Castro-Communist cause. Rural guerrilla warfare was also to be employed, but

only in a way which strongly suggests that the insurgents planned to use the guerrillas as a strategic diversion. Cuba supported implementation of the "rapid victory" plan with financial assistance and by training several hundred young Venezuelans in guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

Stages I, II, and III of the insurgent plan went into operation in 1951 and involved a "softening up" period of riots and terrorist actions in Caracas and other cities. Stage IV was implemented early in 1962 when guerrilla bands, consisting mainly of students, were sent into eight mountain regions of the country. The essay into guerrilla warfare was a crushing failure: 143 guerrillas were captured and seven killed. Only small bands in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela survived the general guerrilla disaster. All hope of "rapid victory" by the end of 1962 vanished when the support garnered by the insurgents among the Venezuelan military was wasted in uncoordinated and fruitless uprisings by the Marine garrisons at Carúpano (May 1962) and Puerto Cabello (June 1962).

**3. A Communist Proposal for Protracted War.** After the insurgent defeats of early 1962, a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party recommended a new insurgency strategy of protracted rural guerrilla war in a document that contained severe criticisms of the earlier attempt at "rapid victory." The anonymous critic confirmed that the insurgents had expected to win victory through urban insurgency violence and military garrison revolts alone. He claimed that, in consequence, the insurgents had never really answered for themselves the question: "For what purpose do we have guerrilla fronts?" He criticized the lack of centralized political and military direction in the insurgent effort, the "abominable choice" of guerrilla personnel, the "stupid terrorism" of some urban insurgent actions, and the "adventurism" which prompted the Carúpano and Puerto Cabello garrison revolts.

The Communist critic urged the insurgents to abandon thoughts of "rapid victory" and to concentrate on guerrilla warfare. He acknowledged that the urban insurgency effort had developed to such an extent that, in this

respect, the Venezuelan insurgents had improved on the revolutionary techniques employed by the Castro forces in Cuba. But he warned the insurgents not to overestimate the urban insurgents or to forget that they could only be an auxiliary to the rural guerrillas "even though, in the beginning, the exploits of the urban guerrillas may sometimes appear more spectacular and brilliant."

4. The Second Insurgent Attempt at Rapid Victory. The Venezuelan insurgents rejected the proposal for protracted war and, in late 1962, undertook a second attempt at "rapid victory." The strategy called for the main rebel energies to be centered on a campaign of urban and urban-based insurgency violence that would aim at one or both of two objectives: (a) undermine public confidence in the Betancourt Government and thereby induce a military or civilian revolt against it; (b) prevent or disrupt the elections of December 1963 that would choose a new Venezuelan President. The insurgents considered that success in either objective would plunge the country into a crisis out of which Castro-Communism would emerge victorious. In keeping with the emphasis on urban insurgency in the new strategy, no new rural guerrilla fronts were established, but the surviving guerrilla bands in Falcón and El Charal were reinforced and encouraged into action.

The second insurgent strategy for "rapid victory" was conceived of, and implemented, as a two-stage effort. For more than a year, from late Summer 1962 into Autumn 1963, the insurgents attempted to bring down the Betancourt Government by a sustained campaign of urban and urban-rural terrorism which included more than 1,000 acts of robbery, arson, sabotage, street violence, and sniping. Caracas bore the main brunt of the attack. The terrorism initially induced what President Betancourt described as "a dangerous period in which stunned surprise produced a kind of public paralysis," but ultimately aroused public resentment, and failed to stimulate the military or civilian revolt for which the insurgents hoped.

The second stage of the insurgent strategy called for disruption of the December 1963 elections with an even greater outburst of terrorist

violence, coupled with civil war in Caracas with the aid of mortars, bazookas, recoilless rifles, and other weapons smuggled in from Cuba. The attempt at civil war was frustrated when the government discovered the Cuban arms on an ocean beach. The attempt to wreck the elections led to a stunning insurgent defeat when millions of Venezuelan citizens braved terrorist threats of death and went to the polls. Raúl Leoni was elected to succeed President Betancourt.

5. The Insurgent Shift to Protracted War. Insurgency violence in Venezuela dropped off to the near vanishing point for several months after the December 1963 elections. One faction in the Castroite Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) withdrew from the insurgency fight. Another MIR faction agreed with the Venezuelan Communist Party in Spring 1964 to resume the insurgency as a protracted war in which primary emphasis would be placed upon rural guerrilla warfare, secondary emphasis on urban insurgency. The Venezuelan Government charged that Cuba sent in \$1,000,000 during 1964 to aid the new insurgent effort.

Relaxations in government security precautions assisted the opening of a guerrilla training camp in the "El Bachiller" mountains southeast of Caracas and the sending of reinforcements to the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas. The Venezuelan Army destroyed the "El Bachiller" camp in July-August 1964. It was actively engaged against the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas in the closing months of 1964.

Urban insurgency violence in Venezuela during 1964 was relatively minor. It appeared that the main Castro-Communist hopes of future victory were pinned to the success and expansion of the rural guerrilla effort.

## II. INSURGENT ORGANIZATION, WEAPONS, AND LOGISTICS

6. The Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). The organization of the Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela during the first campaign for "rapid victory" was extremely faulty. No central military command as established to coordinate the various insurgent actions; and the result, in the words of one Communist critic, was an "intolerable dispersion" of the rebel effort. To correct this condition, the insurgents enrolled all their forces as of late 1962 into the clandestine Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN).

The FALN has two principal constituent forces: the urban and urban-based terrorists organized into Tactical Combat Units (UTCs) and the rural guerrillas of Falcón and El Charal. As of late 1963, the FALN may have had a near peak strength of 600-1,000 terrorists. The number of rural guerrillas may have risen to as many as 250 by late 1964. The FALN also draws support from auxiliary units comprised of students and other youth groups. The quality of FALN personnel is generally high, inasmuch as most of its members have a university or secondary school education, but the FALN has also recruited terrorists in urban slums, poor working class districts, and among juvenile delinquents and dope addicts.

FALN operations are directed from a supreme headquarters in Caracas under the aegis of a FALN General Staff. The country as a whole is divided into a number of FALN military districts, each with its own district command and supporting staff. There is considerable evidence to indicate that the Caracas headquarters has achieved a high degree of centralized control over FALN effectives in different parts of Venezuela, even to the point of establishing monthly budgets for individual units. The FALN also has a highly organized Intelligence Service.

7. Insurgent Weaponry. The Venezuelan insurgents possess considerably more arms than did Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces during most of their stay in the Cuban Sierra Maestra. In part this is because the Castro-Communists gained possession of a substantial number of the police and

military weapons which fell into civilian hands at Caracas during 1958. Another important source of arms supply, perhaps the most productive of all, is purchase from secret agents in some of the Venezuelan police forces. Urban terrorists have also picked up numerous arms by robberies, one of which netted 127 rifles, but their gains in this direction have been counterbalanced by the repeated and heavy losses of arms by the rural guerrillas. Insurgent procurement of explosive and incendiary materials is probably not a difficult task in view of the large quantities of such materials stockpiled or produced by Venezuela's petroleum, construction, chemical, and petrochemical industries.

The insurgent arms consist mainly of submachine guns, rifles, pistols, and revolvers of types discarded or in current use by Venezuelan military and police forces. Government officials consistently discounted newspaper reports that Cuba was sending arms to the insurgents until the discovery in late 1963 of the Cuban arms cache containing automatic rifles, submachine guns, mortars, bazookas, and recoilless rifles. President Raúl Leoni declared in late 1964 that Cuba had sent in "numerous arms" to the insurgents during the course of the year, but gave no further details.

Incendiary devices utilized by the insurgents have ranged from the simple Molotov cocktail to sophisticated devices such as gasoline jelly and phosphorus bombs. The most commonly used explosive device has been the niple, or homemade pipe bomb. The insurgents have also demonstrated considerable skill in fabricating powerful time-bombs, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, and grenades. Sabotage of oil pipelines is often accomplished with the aid of a small perforation device called a carga hueca ("hollow charge") which is in wide use by the petroleum industry.

8. Insurgent Supply Systems. The supply problem of the Venezuelan insurgents is simplified by the fact that most of their insurgents are urban terrorists, rather than rural guerrillas. All the miscellaneous supplies needed to support the insurgency, from canned foods to radio equipment, can be obtained through robbery of the well-stocked retail stores and warehouses of major Venezuelan cities.

Caracas has experienced the greatest number of insurgent robberies and is probably the hub of the insurgent supply system. Supplies from Caracas to terrorist cells in interior cities of Venezuela are probably transported entirely by motor vehicle, under cover of civilian traffic. Rural guerrillas are supplied by road (Falcón) or by mules and burros (El Charal); there is also evidence to indicate that guerrillas have occasionally been supplied by air drop and coastal launch. A recent Venezuelan Communist publication suggests that the guerrillas are attempting to reduce their dependence on external supplies and to rely as much as possible on supplies available within guerrilla zones.

### III. URBAN AND URBAN-RURAL INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS

9. Urban Insurgency. The Castro-Communist insurgents have never possessed sufficient popular support in the major cities of Venezuela to mount two classic types of urban insurgency operations: large-scale riot and the revolutionary general strike. Riots and other acts of street violence in Caracas, for example, have been mainly the work of a few hundred university and secondary school students, particularly those enrolled in youth organizations of the Venezuelan Communist Party and the Castroite Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). Street violence techniques have included: (a) massing of students to block traffic, burn motor vehicles, and erect street barricades; (b) fanning out of small "shock brigades" to conduct similar actions in other streets; and (c) sniper fire from buildings and moving automobiles.

Small terrorist units, called Tactical Combat Units (UTCs), are used for robberies, sabotage, arson, and murders of police and National Guardsmen. The UTCs appear to be organized into Detachments of about 30 personnel, of which 5-8 men may engage in the bolder terrorist actions with the rest fulfilling lesser insurgency roles. Student terrorists at the Central University in Caracas are organized into brigades which function as auxiliary UTC Detachments.

The success attending many individual terrorist actions is often attributable to careful advance preparation, including written operations plans. Attacks on Venezuelan-owned properties are usually limited to robbery; those on U.S. properties generally involve some use of incendiaries and explosives. The terrorists operate in the mobile hit-and-run style of modern gangsters, usually proceeding to and from their targets in stolen automobiles.

The insurgents in Caracas attempted on several occasions in 1963 to induce an atmosphere of mass terror in the city through stepped-up sniper fire and companion acts of "shock brigade" violence. These operations briefly interrupted normal patterns of life in the city areas affected but failed to produce mass terror, probably because Caracas residents had already experienced three years of insurgency violence and were no longer easily frightened by the sound of gunfire and street disturbances. Mass terror might nonetheless be a tactic which insurgents could apply to greater effect in other Latin American cities which have not passed through the same preliminary baptism of insurgent fire as Caracas.

**10. Motorized Urban-Rural Insurgency.** Venezuela in recent decades has experienced a transportation revolution that has endowed it with the best national system of paved highways and the largest per capita national fleet of motor vehicles in Latin America. This circumstance has enabled Castro-Communist urban insurgents to expand their operations into the countryside in the form of numerous motorized attacks on rural targets.

Three types of motorized urban-rural insurgency operations have developed. Some extend into suburban areas and include acts of robbery, arson, and sabotage, brief seizures of suburban towns or villages for propaganda effect, and temporary conversions of urban insurgent units into rural guerrilla bands. Similar operations are carried out in more distant rural areas, sometimes against targets located 150 road miles or more from the original urban insurgent base. On a few occasions, urban terrorist cells in western Venezuela have also attempted to assist the Castro-Communist guerrillas in the Falcón and El Charal mountains by diversionary attacks on targets in the rear of government forces engaged in anti-guerrilla operations.

11. Urban and Urban-Rural Counterinsurgency. The Venezuelan Government has consistently maintained that the Castro-Communist urban and urban-rural insurgency violence must be countered by legal and humane methods. Observance of this doctrine has imposed a number of significant restraints on urban and urban-rural counterinsurgency operations. For example, the legal immunity of the Central University at Caracas to police and military search and entry has been respected, despite its use as a sanctuary by terrorists and rioters.

The urban and urban-rural counterinsurgency response has also been hampered by poor police-civilian relations and the serious operational deficiencies of many Venezuelan police forces. Steps taken to improve police capabilities included first-time provision in 1963-1964 of radio patrol cars and radio communications equipment to some municipal and rural police forces. The government has also taken a number of psychological actions to compensate for police deficiencies: it has encouraged public discussion of police problems; it has acknowledged and punished cases of police brutality; and it has frankly told its people that not even the best police forces could provide a totally effective defense against urban terrorist assaults. Significant measures taken to improve police-civilian relations include a police Civic Action program instituted at Caracas in November 1964.

Military assistance in urban and urban-rural counterinsurgency is provided on a routine basis by the National Guard. The Guard is a highly respected paramilitary force which performs efficiently in a great variety of urban and rural internal security missions, including Civic Action. If its personnel strength (9,000) were increased, the Guard could probably function as a totally effective paramilitary force in urban and urban-rural counterinsurgency operations. At present, however, the Guard is spread so thinly over Venezuela and is engaged in so many security missions, that the government has been obliged to rely heavily on the Army for assistance in coping with major outbreaks of urban insurgency violence, especially in the Caracas area.

The Venezuelan Army has performed thus far with success in the urban counterinsurgency mission, in the sense that each strong show of Army force has been sufficient to discourage, put down, or counter outbreaks of Castro-Communist urban insurgency violence. But there appear to be a number of gaps in the Army's preparedness for urban counterinsurgency which, if remedied, might significantly improve its capabilities in this field. These are noted below in Part V, "Conclusions."

#### IV. GUERRILLA AND ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS

12. The Falcón Guerrillas. Castro-Communist attempts to implant rural guerrillas in Venezuela have met with failure in all but two western mountain regions: Falcón State and El Charal. In Falcón, the guerrillas operate in mountain ranges covered with dense mats of cloud forest and honeycombed with caverns and caves. Falcón mountaineers are a close-knit group who traditionally have aided friends and relatives who rise in rebellions against incumbent Venezuelan governments. Two Castro-Communist guerrilla leaders in the Falcón mountains, Domingo Urbina and Douglas Bravo, were men with extensive local family connections. These ties assisted them to establish initial guerrilla footholds, which they gradually strengthened by drawing in recruits from the local mountaineers and from other parts of Venezuela.

Urbina and Bravo were in Falcón as of early 1962 but avoided overt guerrilla action for many months while they established contacts and reconnoitered terrain. In this way, they escaped the fate of three Castro-Communist guerrilla bands which also entered the Falcón mountains in early 1962, and attempted to move precipitately into operation. Police and military units rounded up all three bands and captured about 40 guerrilla personnel.

In December 1962 the guerrillas under Urbina and Bravo, then thought to number 85-130 men, attracted attention by murdering two policemen in a Falcón mountain village. The Army responded in January 1963 with a

large anti-guerrilla operation. Urbina's band, consisting mainly of young mountaineer recruits, disintegrated. Bravo's band escaped detection and capture. After the Army withdrew the bulk of its forces in June 1963, Bravo's guerrillas carried out a number of small-scale attacks on mountain villages in the period July-December 1963 but suffered heavy losses in encounters with small police-military patrols.

Guerrilla actions in Falcón virtually ceased in the first half of 1964. Domingo Urbina made his peace with the government and went into exile. The guerrillas under Bravo's command were reinforced in mid-1964 and may have come to number as many as 150 men. Bravo's guerrillas resumed action in July-September 1964 with a series of small-scale attacks on mountain villages and police and military personnel. The Army mounted a large operation against the Falcón guerrillas in late 1964 and has promised to continue it until the insurgents are eliminated.

13. The El Charal Guerrillas. The guerrilla region known as El Charal is situated in a sector of the Venezuelan Andes. It is a complex region of mountains, valleys, and canyons, much given over to coffee plantations at lower elevations and to primitive, shifting agriculture in forest clearings on higher mountain slopes accessible only by jeep, mule, or on foot. As in Falcón, the guerrillas in El Charal possessed two leaders, Argimiro Gabaldón and Lino Díaz, whose local family connections assisted establishment of initial guerrilla footholds. The top guerrilla commander, Juan Vicente Cabezas, is probably not a native of El Charal.

The first guerrilla bands entered El Charal in early 1962 and met with early disaster, losing 52 men in encounters with government patrols. The surviving guerrillas went into hiding and spent many months in reorganization and consolidation. There was a flurry of minor guerrilla actions in late 1963, at which time the insurgents may have possessed as many as 120 men. Guerrilla activity trailed off in early 1964, after a strong Army counter-offensive netted some 40-60 prisoners, but resumed in Summer 1964 after the guerrillas had built up to a reported strength of about 100 men. The Army

undertook another major operation against the El Charal guerrillas in late 1964 and has pledged to continue it until the insurgents are eliminated.

One of the principal El Charal guerrilla leaders, Argimiro Gabaldón, was killed accidentally in December 1964. Lino Díaz made his peace with the government and left the country. Juan Vicente Cabezas was still at large as of the end of 1964.

**14. Military Anti-Guerrilla Operations.** Small units of the Venezuelan Army and National Guard inflicted initial defeats on the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas in early 1962, but the Army did not send in the larger forces which could have conducted thorough clearing operations and prevented surviving insurgents from gaining footholds in the two regions. The Army's decision not to undertake major field operations against the guerrillas in 1962 may have been influenced by three considerations: (a) desire to keep available forces in reserve for more serious insurgency outbreaks anticipated elsewhere in Venezuela; (b) poor state of military readiness for major anti-guerrilla field operations; and (c) need to prepare appropriate action to erase civilian fears of the Army in Falcón and El Charal which stemmed from memories of savage Army repressions of insurrections in the two regions during the 1920's. The Army's failure to eliminate the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas in 1962, or to accomplish the same objective with larger forces in 1963-1964, must also be related to its anti-guerrilla strategy which emphasizes respect for the human and civic rights of civilian populations from which guerrillas draw their support.

The first large Army anti-guerrilla operation was the Falcón campaign of early 1963, which reportedly involved as many as 3,000 men. The Army occupation forces encountered a terrified population which believed that the military would commit atrocities. The Army removed these fears by the good behavior of its troops, by Civic Action programs, and lenient treatment of guerrilla collaborators and local adolescents who had joined the insurgents. The Army's combat operations against the guerrillas were cautious and slow-moving, probably because the Army was using young conscripts who had no previous experience in unconventional war. The Army

failed to score decisive victories over the guerrillas. On the other hand, by avoiding defeats at insurgent hands, the Army proved to the skeptical Venezuelan public that it could hold its own in a major field operation against Castro-type guerrillas.

The first Falcón campaign has been followed by four major anti-guerrilla field operations in 1964: two in El Charal, one in Falcón, and one against guerrillas who appeared briefly in the "El Bachiller" mountains southeast of Caracas. The Army's employment of more aggressive anti-guerrilla tactics is apparently facilitated: (a) by improved military-civilian relations in Falcón and El Charal; (b) by the growing number of Venezuelan military personnel who have passed through training courses in anti-guerrilla warfare.

Operational problems or gaps noted in the study of the Venezuelan Army's anti-guerrilla effort are cited in Part V.

## V. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Castro-Communist insurgency initially pursued a course which differed markedly from the Castro rebellion in Cuba. For three years (1960-1963), the Venezuelan insurgents attempted to win "rapid victory" through strategies which placed primary reliance on urban and urban-based insurgency violence, including military garrison revolts. Rural guerrilla warfare was also employed, but only as a secondary insurgency tactic.

2. Successive failures to gain "rapid victory" induced the Venezuelan insurgents to adopt a new strategy of protracted war in 1964. Primary emphasis has since been placed on continuance and expansion of rural guerrilla warfare. Urban insurgency has been de-emphasized and subordinated to the rural guerrilla effort.

3. Castro-Communists in other Latin American countries are likely to interpret the Venezuelan insurgency experience as confirmation of the Guevara thesis that rural guerrilla warfare must be the principal means of insurgency struggle in the hemisphere.

4. Castro-Communists in other Latin American countries may also consider that although the Venezuelan insurgents initially erred in placing too much reliance on urban and urban-based violence, their experiences in this area deserve study and imitation because of the support which urban insurgents can render to rural guerrillas in a guerrilla-based struggle. Specifically, Castro-Communists elsewhere in Latin America may seek to borrow and improve upon the following Venezuelan urban insurgency techniques: small-unit terrorism, street "shock brigades," sniping, and motorized urban-rural insurgency.

5. The Venezuelan Government has observed the legal and humanitarian restraints appropriate to a Western democracy in its counterinsurgency efforts. This policy has limited the tactical effectiveness of some police and military counterinsurgency operations; on the other hand, it has given the Venezuelan Government a strong moral position in the insurgency struggle which probably more than compensates for the restrictions imposed on its security forces.

6. The Venezuelan Army has performed with general effectiveness in its urban counterinsurgency missions, but it seems initially to have been hampered by uncertainty as to the proper tactics to employ against such novel Castro-Communist insurgency techniques as small-unit terrorism, street violence by dispersed "shock brigades," and concealed sniper fire. This suggests that it may be appropriate to raise the following questions with respect to the adequacy of current counterinsurgency programs not only in Venezuela, but in Latin America generally:

a. Whether sufficient study has been undertaken of the readiness, particularly as regards to training and tactics of Latin American military forces to meet urban insurgency techniques of the varied types employed in Venezuela.

b. Whether sufficient attention is currently given in training programs for Latin American military forces as to appropriate tactics for use in urban anti-terrorist, anti-sniper, and anti-"shock brigade" operations, in addition to the traditional emphasis on military familiarization with techniques of urban riot control.

7. Study of the Venezuelan Army's urban counterinsurgency operations also indicates the following operational problems and gaps of possible interest:

a. Past frictions between Venezuelan military and police make it doubtful that full cooperation between the two forces is achieved in urban counterinsurgency operations. This suggests a possible need for further study of military-police relationships, not only in Venezuela but elsewhere in Latin America.

b. Vehicles used by the Venezuelan military in urban counterinsurgency operations included jeeps, open personnel carriers, and canvas-top trucks that were vulnerable to sniper fire. Movement of military vehicles was also impeded by tacks and other sharp objects which "shock brigades" placed in city streets. This suggests the need for study of the types of vehicles currently available to the Venezuelan military, and to the Latin American military generally, for urban counterinsurgency missions. Desirable actions might include development of an urban counterinsurgency vehicle and provision of light and detachable armor for normally unarmored equipment.

c. Some military and police garrisons in Caracas have proven vulnerable to sniper fire from nearby mountains and high-rise buildings. This suggests that need for manuals on military installation security in urban areas which would help Latin American commanders to identify points of vulnerability and take appropriate countermeasures.

d. The Venezuelan Army has thus far confined its Civic Action programs entirely to rural areas of the country, even though opportunities for useful application of Civic Action abound in Caracas and other cities which have been important centers of insurgency violence.

8. Operational problems and gaps noted in the study of the Venezuelan military's anti-guerrilla efforts are listed below; in the case of three problems cited, the Venezuelan military has applied solutions which may also be of interest:

a. Civilian ID Cards. The first Army occupation force which entered the Falcón guerrilla zone found that one reason for civilian fear and distrust of the Army was the suspicion that the many persons who did not possess personal ID cards, as required by Venezuelan law, would be liable to arrest as guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators. The Ministry of Interior Relations resolved the problem by sending in mobile ID units. In other Latin American countries where ID cards are required by law, and civilian populations in guerrilla zones may not possess them, it may be useful to attach mobile ID units to military anti-guerrilla forces.

b. Water tank trucks. Many villages in the Falcón and El Charal guerrilla zones are chronically short of water at certain periods of the year or rely upon dependable, but polluted, sources of water supply. The Venezuelan Army found water tank trucks useful as a means of relieving military pressure on local water supplies and protecting military personnel against infection; the trucks were also useful as Civic Action equipment.

c. Vertical climate problems. Troops operating in the Falcón and El Charal mountains encountered significant problems of visibility, movement, radio communications, and cold in higher elevations characterized by frequent rainfall and mist. This suggests the utility of a study effort to inventory operational problems likely to be encountered in vertical climate zones of Latin American mountain regions located in tropical and subtropical latitudes.

d. Field rations. Venezuelan military operations have been impeded by the lack of pre-packaged field rations other than high cost imported rations which the Army probably has been reluctant to expend. The Venezuelan Ministry of Defense is currently developing locally produced field rations which it estimates will be almost half the cost of imported rations and contain foods more palatable to the Venezuelan soldier. The new rations may be of interest as a type of ration which could be locally produced in other Latin American countries.

e. Detection. The Venezuelan military has experienced considerable difficulty in trying to locate guerrilla hideouts in limestone cavern regions (Falcón) and densely forested mountain regions (Falcón and El Charal). This suggests a need for portable infrared detection devices and night-flying helicopters equipped with this equipment. Also noteworthy is the Venezuelan Army's failure to use dogs in tracking operations against guerrillas.

f. Psychological warfare devices. There is no information to indicate that the Venezuelan military has utilized specialized psychological warfare devices which might help to undermine guerrilla morale and encourage guerrilla surrenders. Useful types of devices might include canisters with safe-conduct passes, noisemakers, flares, and simulation devices.

g. Fingerprint equipment. Venezuelan military forces appear to be in need of fingerprint equipment that would enable soldiers to take quick prints of guerrillas killed in combat. At present, this task is left to police agents who sometimes journey to scenes of previous Army encounters with guerrillas only to find that the dead insurgents have been removed by their comrades, or that their bodies have decomposed so rapidly that identification is impossible.

**SECTION II**

**DISCUSSION**

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Chapter 2

THE FIRST INSURGENT ATTEMPT AT RAPID VICTORY

(October 1960 - June 1962)

Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela erupted at Caracas in October 1960 when police arrested three editors of an MIR publication which called for "popular revolution" against the Betancourt Government. Hundreds of university and secondary school students staged protest riots, hurling rocks, smashing windows, and burning buses and automobiles. The student disturbances continued for eight days; on the sixth day, criminal looting and sniping broke out in some of the poor working class districts.

The police at first dealt cautiously with the student rioters, using mainly tear gas in an effort to avoid student fatalities. After the criminal looting developed, President Betancourt authorized more resolute police action and sent in National Guard and Army troops. Eight persons were killed in the course of the riots; more than 100 were wounded.<sup>1</sup>

The October 1960 violence at Caracas was apparently a spur-of-the-moment outburst rather than a preplanned insurgency action.<sup>2</sup> Documents found in the homes of arrested rioters made it plain, however, that the riots coincided with a period of active Castro-Communist preparation for rebellion against the Betancourt Government.<sup>3</sup> One document, for example, alluded to a master subversive plan that envisaged formation of a master insurgent

1. The October 1960 riots are described in contemporary Caracas newspaper reports and in speeches by President Betancourt collected in Rómulo Betancourt, Tres años de gobierno democrático, 1959-1962, Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, Vol. 1, pp. 379, 453-455.
2. A MIR bulletin later described "the action of the masses" in October 1960 as "rudderless" -- i.e., without direction. Quoted in El Universal, 25 January 1961.
3. Extracts from the captured insurgent documents are contained in a Ministry of Interior Relations communique printed in El Universal, 29 October 1960.

secretariat at Caraca' to undertake agitational work among the masses, develop contacts in the Venezuelan military, organize and train student brigades, and form propaganda and finance committees. Another document, in the form of a hasty analysis of the October riots, rejoiced that the "student movement" had allied itself with the "popular movement" — i.e., with the criminal looters in the public housing project. The same document also noted that the violence had induced the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD), the second largest in Venezuela, to threaten withdrawal from the coalition of parties supporting President Betancourt. "To break up the coalition," the document concluded, "is important."<sup>1</sup>

The Communists and the MIR were apparently so elated by the October riots, by the hesitant police response, and by signs of strain in the government coalition, that they reached the conclusion that more demonstrations and riots in Caracas and other cities might be enough to force Betancourt out of office. A telephone workers strike at Caracas in late November 1960 was seized upon as the moment of opportunity. Communist and MIR trade union leaders issued a call for a revolutionary general strike. University and secondary school students, some now equipped with Molotov cocktails and firearms, poured into the Caracas streets for another round of violence. Minor student disorders broke out in other Venezuelan cities. A clandestine revolutionary government, calling itself the National Junta of Liberation, was hastily formed — at least on paper.<sup>2</sup>

The November 1960 riots at Caracas lasted eight days and left at least 8 persons dead and 200 injured. Army and National Guard troops were once more called in to aid the police. But the results of the violence were not

- 
1. When Betancourt took office in February 1959, he put together a coalition government of national unity that included cabinet ministers of the three largest parties: his own Acción Democrática, URD, and COPEI. This gave him an absolute majority in both houses of the National Congress and assisted early passage of many important reform bills. The Communists and the MIR spent much time trying to break up the coalition and were rewarded when URD defected (November 1960) and a split developed in Acción Democrática (late 1961).
  2. According to an internal MIR party bulletin, the National Junta of Liberation was formed so hastily that its existence was "completely unknown" during the early days of the November riots. Quoted in El Universal, 25 January 1961.

as the Castro-Communists hoped. The revolutionary general strike never materialized. The government also struck back more vigorously than in October 1960. Some civil liberties, including the right of free assembly, were suspended. Most Communist and MIR publications were shut down. Criminal charges were brought against leaders of the two parties who were directly implicated in the violence. Energetic steps were taken to oust Communist and MIR party members from posts of influence in the organized labor movement, in national press, radio, and television, and in the public secondary schools.<sup>1</sup>

The Communists and the MIR responded to the government counter-attack with the propaganda cry that Betancourt had turned into a dictator engaged in "naked repression" of the people. Privately, in self-criticism documents, the two parties acknowledged that the government's position was stronger than expected, that a prolonged and difficult insurgency struggle was in prospect.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Choice of an Insurgency Strategy

The failure of the November 1960 riots also convinced the Communists and the MIR of the need to settle upon some type of formal insurgency strategy. The insurgents now realized, as one of them remarked, that it was necessary to move beyond "the traditional and routine method of mass fighting" — i.e., urban rioting.<sup>3</sup> It was also noted that Caracas had been the only real locus of insurgency

1. Some 1,500 Communist and MIR teachers were ultimately ousted from the secondary schools by the government; in organized labor and other fields, the Communists lost virtually all the positions of prestige and power which they had gained under the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. Statement of the U. S. Ambassador to Venezuela in U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 51; also Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, pp. 94-95.
2. "The blow struck by Betancourt demonstrates that the enemy will employ all resources to avoid his defeat, and that this defeat will only come about after a prolonged and difficult struggle." Venezuelan Communist Party bulletin, quoted in El Universal, 25 January 1961.
3. Statement of the Venezuelan Communist leader, Pompeyo Márquez, as quoted in Radio Havana broadcast, 27 February 1963.

organization and violence, that the remainder of the country was still outside the scope of the insurgency struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Agreement on the need for a new insurgency strategy did not carry with it, however, a consensus in the Communist and MIR parties as to the type of strategy that should be adopted. On the contrary, a debate of fundamental importance to the future course of the Castro-Communist insurgency arose within the insurgent camp. Some voices claimed that the only proper course would be a strategy of protracted rural guerrilla war along the general lines proposed by Mao Tse-tung and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Other voices asserted that protracted war was unnecessary, that means were available to implement a strategy that promised "rapid victory" to the insurgent cause.<sup>2</sup>

How long the debate went on between the advocates of protracted war and "rapid victory" is not known; nor is it possible to say, on the basis of currently available information, which part of the Communist and MIR leadership was ranged on one side, which part on the other. But it is known that the adherents of "rapid victory" prevailed. Their success was reflected in the following statement which appeared in a Communist or MIR party bulletin as of late 1961 or early 1962: "We have not characterized the struggle as a protracted war (una guerra prolongada); on the contrary, we have before us the possibility of seizing political power in the not very remote future."<sup>3</sup>

Of even greater interest were the means by which the proponents of the "rapid victory" strategy proposed to carry it to completion. The

1. "We are aware that as of today Caracas is at the vanguard of the nation's thought. It is also true that the interior of the country incorporates itself with every passing day and with increasing strength into the fight against Betancourt AND FOR A GOVERNMENT DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT ONE. But the rhythm of this incorporation is still slow." Venezuelan Communist Party information bulletin, quoted in El Universal, 25 January 1961.
2. The existence of the debate in the insurgent ranks between the advocates of protracted war (guerra prolongada) and "rapid victory" (victoria rápida) is noted in a Venezuelan Communist Party document reproduced in Chapter 3 of this report.
3. Quoted in El Universal, 21 February 1962.

insurgency struggle was to be waged mainly in the cities of Venezuela, especially Caracas, where victory would be won through a combination of street violence, terrorism, and uprisings by military garrisons won over to the Castro-Communist cause. Rural guerrilla warfare would also be employed, but only in a way which strongly suggested that the insurgents planned to use the guerrillas as a strategic diversion that would draw the government's attention away from the cities at the very period when some of its urban garrisons were making ready to rise against it.

#### The Plan for Rapid Victory

The details of the insurgent strategy for "rapid victory" were incorporated in a secret planning document which later came into government possession and was described in testimony by the Venezuelan Minister of Defense before a committee of the National Congress.<sup>1</sup> The plan envisioned five progressive steps, or stages, in the build-up of an insurgency attack that would lead to a Castro-Communist takeover of Venezuela about the end of 1962. Stages I, II, and III were to consist mainly in a revivification and expansion of urban insurgency efforts (1961). Stage IV would involve the implementation of rural guerrillas in various mountain regions of the country (early 1962). Stage V was to come into operation in Summer 1962: it would be a period of "active revolutionary war" in which the insurgents would undertake conventional military operations in conjunction with rural guerrilla warfare and urban insurgency on a grand scale. No termination date was set for Stage V, but the plan commented that once this stage was implemented, "the final goal will not be far away."

1. The Defense Minister's testimony was reported extensively in El Nacional, 25 April 1962, and La Esfera, 4 May 1962. As insurgency events in Venezuela before and for some time after April-May 1962 followed the sequence described in the planning document, it seems reasonable to conclude (as did the Defense Minister) that the document in question was the plan which the Castro-Communists actually followed in their quest for "rapid victory."

The crucial part of the insurgent plan was the projected transition from rural guerrilla warfare (Stage IV) to conventional military operations (Stage V) within the space of only a few months. The plan gave no specific indication as to how the transition was to be achieved and remarked only that Stage IV would end "when a revolutionary army, or the Principal Force, comes into being." Events were to show, however, that the insurgents did not expect that the rural guerrilla effort would mature in sufficient time to provide the key to "rapid victory." The revolutionary army, or Principal Force, was rather to emerge out of military garrison revolts that would be staged in Spring 1962.

#### The Role of Castro Cuba

Actual implementation of the five-stage plan for "rapid victory" presented the insurgents with a number of serious initial problems. Neither the Communist nor the MIR party membership had any prior experience in rural guerrilla warfare nor any real experience in urban insurgency beyond street rioting. There was also a shortage of arms and of insurgent personnel who knew how to use them. As one of the insurgents later described the situation: "What always happened in our country was this: the weapons were controlled by the North Americans and their lackeys, the armed forces.... An honest revolutionary in Latin America, or at least in Venezuela, could not carry a pistol, nor did we know how to place a bomb."<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately for the insurgents, expert assistance was close at hand. The Castro Government in Cuba apparently took no part in the insurgent riots at Caracas in October-November 1960, even though its relations with the Betancourt Government were near the breaking point.<sup>2</sup> But thereafter Cuba

1. Statement of Pedro Duno, representative in Cuba of the Venezuelan National Liberation Front, as quoted in Radio Havana broadcast, 22 November 1963.
2. A UPI despatch from Caracas in late 1960 quoted a high government official as saying that although persons close to Castro were involved in the November riots, there was no proof to indicate that the Cuban Government had supplied arms, money, or other encouragement to the rioters. Washington Post, 5 December 1960.

moved actively to encourage continuance and expansion of the insurgent effort. Its operations in this respect were facilitated by the fact that airline communications between Caracas and Havana remained open until late 1961, when the Betancourt Government finally decided to break off diplomatic relations.<sup>1</sup>

Initial Cuban assistance to the Venezuelan insurgents appears to have been mainly financial. How much money was actually sent in cannot be determined because the funds were usually transmitted by Communist, MIR, and other pro-Castro deputies to the Venezuelan National Congress whose baggage was immune to customs search.<sup>2</sup>

Venezuelans also became the most numerous national group among the Latin American youths who went to Cuba in 1961-1962 for training in guerrilla warfare and urban terrorism. The U. S. Central Intelligence Agency estimated that more than 200 Venezuelans received such training in 1962 alone.<sup>3</sup> One of the trainees who came back to Venezuela turned himself over to the authorities in September 1961, along with documents attesting to his appointment to the rank of Lt. Commander in a clandestine insurgent army. His training in Cuba included classes in Marxism, the geography of Venezuela, sabotage, and the use of grenades, bazookas, machine guns, submachine guns, and semiautomatic rifles.<sup>4</sup> Some of the advanced techniques of sabotage which

1. According to President Betancourt, the principal reason for the long delay in breaking off relations with Cuba was humanitarian since some 500-600 political refugees were housed at Havana in buildings under Venezuelan diplomatic protection.
2. Statement of the U. S. Ambassador to Venezuela in U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 53.
3. Statement of CIA director John A. McCone in U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 64.
4. The trainee's name was Juan de Dios Marín; his revelations and supporting credentials were published in La Esfera, 8 September 1961. An OAS committee which visited Venezuela in December 1963 also interviewed Marín and reported that he had furnished important information on training activities in Cuba and produced documents to substantiate his testimony.

the Venezuelan insurgents were to demonstrate in 1962 and 1963 were probably also learned from Cuban instructors.<sup>1</sup>

Another mode of Cuban support for the Venezuelan insurgency was the provision of manuals on guerrilla warfare, sabotage, and the management and care of weapons which were reproduced in the hundreds and thousands of copies by clandestine printing presses and mimeographs in Caracas. But the Castro Government seems to have refrained from sending any arms into Venezuela until Autumn 1963, when a large Cuban arms cache was discovered on an ocean beach in the western part of the country.

In view of the heavy Cuban involvement in the Venezuelan insurgency, it is of interest to note that two important Cuban leaders, Castro, and Guevara, may have held opposing views as to the wisdom of the insurgents' plan to gain a "rapid victory" in Venezuela through a strategy which placed far more reliance on urban and military insurgency than on rural guerrilla warfare. Guevara in all his writings has consistently urged that a strategy based on protracted rural guerrilla war is the only correct road for future revolutions in Latin America.<sup>2</sup> Castro, on the other hand, has never been as much a doctrinaire as Guevara and may have been only too willing to assist any insurgent strategy that appeared to promise an early victory in Venezuela. In April 1962, as the pace of the Venezuelan insurgent attack quickened and the plan for "rapid victory" moved into its final stages, Castro publicly boasted that Betancourt would be overthrown within a year.<sup>3</sup>

1. E.g., in January 1962 the luggage of a Venezuelan Communist returning from Cuba was searched at the Maracaibo airport. A newspaper reported that police found four rectangular boxes, about the size of cigarette packs, each containing a gelatinous material of yellow color. Also found were two small copper tubes, each enclosing a glass vial holding a primary ignition detonator. La Esfera, 16 February 1962.
2. E.g., Ernesto "Che" Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Means," Peking Review, 10 January 1964, pp. 14-21.
3. Speech of 19 April 1962, quoted in Rómulo Betancourt, "The Venezuelan Miracle," The Reporter, 13 August 1964, p. 39.

### Urban Insurgency

The Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela, as earlier noted, proposed to open their thrust to "rapid victory" with a prolonged period of urban insurgency violence (Stages I, II, III). This was intended to induce a state of paralysis and alarm in the urban public or a "softening up" effect. It was also viewed as an opportunity to improve and expand existing urban insurgency techniques by organizing small "shock brigades" for lightning acts of street violence and small terrorist units for expert acts of robbery, assassination, and sabotage. Finally, a renewed campaign of urban insurgency would fill the gap until the Castro-Communists were ready, as of early 1962, to move into the rural guerrilla phase (Stage IV) of the "rapid victory" plan.

Stage I of the renewed urban insurgency effort involved only the creation of secret "activist nuclei" in Caracas and other urban centers of the country. This step was probably completed as of early 1961 in most, if not all, of the larger Venezuelan cities.

Stage II of the insurgent plan called for more violence in the form of riots and subversive demonstrations in Caracas and other cities. The Castro-Communists pursued this tactic to such effect that, according to the Ministry of Interior Relations, a total of 113 "significant riots" (motines de importancia) were fomented in Caracas and other cities during 1961. The scale of violence was not high, for only 9 persons were killed and 39 wounded.<sup>1</sup> This would seem to indicate that the insurgents used the riots mainly as training exercises for their recruits and as a psychological device to keep the urban public in a state of anxiety and forboding.

Stage III of the insurgent plan went into operation at Caracas in late Summer and Autumn 1961, as urban "shock brigades" and small terrorist units made their appearance.<sup>2</sup> The tempo of violence rose perceptibly in October-December 1961, when 13 persons were killed and 32 wounded in Caracas and

1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 38.
2. One of the earliest "shock brigade" actions in Caracas, possibly the first, is reported in El Universal, 13 July 1961.

other cities as the result of terrorist, sniper, Molotov cocktail and niple — i.e., homemade pipe bomb — attacks. Five of the slain were Caracas policemen shot down in accordance with a terrorist promise (by no means fully realized) "to kill a policeman a day."<sup>1</sup>

The culmination of Stage III was reached in late January 1962. During a transport workers strike at San Cristóbal, a city at the western extremity of the Venezuelan Andes, a Castro-Communist insurgent unit seized the local radio station and broadcast an appeal for a "people's insurrection." Riots and an up-surge of terrorist activity followed in Caracas and several other cities on 22-25 January, leaving a total of 19 persons dead and 110 injured.<sup>2</sup> On the night of 28-29 January a blood-bath was narrowly averted at La Guaira, the seaport of Caracas, when police rounded up 138 armed youths who were sent into the city by the insurgents for the purpose of staging almost suicidal dawn attacks on three nearby military garrisons.<sup>3</sup>

After January 1962 the pace of the urban insurgency attack in Venezuela temporarily slackened as the insurgents moved into the rural guerrilla phase (Stage IV) of their plan for "rapid victory."<sup>4</sup> It is probable that the insurgents now wished to husband their urban effectives until the guerrillas gathered strength and the call came in Summer 1962 to renew urban insurgency on a grand scale as part of the "active revolutionary war" that was to bring final Castro-Communist triumph (Stage V). Only when it appeared that the rural guerrillas were running into serious trouble did the number of urban insurgency incidents again reach the level of January '62.

1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 254.
2. Ibid., p. 253.
3. Ibid., 252-253, 254-255.
4. See the fold-out orientation map appended to Chapter 11 of this report and the accompanying chart which plots the monthly volume of terrorism and sabotage incidents in Caracas and other cities for the period January 1962-January 1964.

### Guerrilla Warfare

At the end of January 1962 peasants in a mountainous region of eastern Venezuela brought word to the authorities that a Castro-Communist guerrilla training camp was in operation at a secluded coffee hacienda on the slopes of Mt. Turimiquire near the juncture of Sucre, Anzoátegui, and Monagas States. The news came as no great surprise, for the insurgents had never concealed their intention to resort to guerrilla warfare in Venezuela as soon as they judged that conditions were ripe.<sup>1</sup>

Police and military patrols moved into the Turimiquire area without encountering resistance. The guerrilla camp was found to contain gun emplacements, a shooting range, a large tent, a small radio station, a cache of Army rifles and military uniforms, a large supply of ammunition, and provisions sufficient to sustain more than 100 men for several days. Local peasants reported that the hacienda had been sold in Autumn 1961 to a group of men from Caracas who gave instruction classes in reading, writing, Communist doctrine, and the use of firearms. Peasants in the region were encouraged to attend Saturday night social gatherings at the hacienda and to bring as many friends as possible. Supplies for the camp were air-dropped to a cleared area which the Ministry of Defense described as either "a helicopter landing strip or drop zone."<sup>2</sup>

Turimiquire proved to be the first and by far the most elaborate of the guerrilla bases which the Castro-Communists attempted to establish in Venezuela in order to carry out Stage IV of the plan for "rapid victory."

1. "The outbreak of a guerrilla war against the Betancourt Government was confidently predicted [to the author] by several Communist leaders in the summer of 1961, with the added assurance that when it occurred, the Communists would 'naturally' be part of such a movement." Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 94.
2. El Universal, 30 January, 1, 2, 3 February 1962; also the court testimony of one of the peasants associated with the Turimiquire guerrillas in La Esfera, 3 December 1962. A Ministry of Defense communique describing the Turimiquire camp is printed in El Universal and La Esfera, 9 May 1962.

In the period February-April 1962 guerrilla groups went into operation in seven other mountain regions: Miranda, Vigirima, Yaracuy, Falcón, El Charal, Agua Viva, and La Azulita.<sup>1</sup>

The guerrillas who came so suddenly to life were nearly all students from the Central University at Caracas, from some of the secondary schools in Caracas, and from the University of the Andes at Mérida. Some were seasoned urban terrorists like Juan Vicente Cabezas, the principal guerrilla leader in El Charal, who was already on the police wanted list in Caracas. Some had received training in guerrilla warfare in Cuba or during weekend excursion trips into the mountains surrounding Caracas and other Venezuelan cities.<sup>2</sup> But many, perhaps by far the greatest number, were young men who were rounded up at the last moment in Caracas and persuaded to join the guerrilla enterprise.<sup>3</sup>

The prospective guerrillas made their way toward the assigned mountain base areas by automobile, truck, and jeep under the protective screen of normal civilian traffic.<sup>4</sup> They appear to have been well supplied with arms, camping equipment, radios, money to buy food from the peasantry, and an initial supply of canned goods — including, in at least one case, jars of imported marmalade.<sup>5</sup> In Falcón and El Charal, the guerrilla leadership included men with family connections in the two areas. Elsewhere, it appears that the student guerrillas went in "cold" to the assigned base areas in the expectation of striking up an early rapport with the peasantry.

1. The locations of these guerrilla sites are shown on the fold-out map appended to Chapter 11 of this report.
2. Statement of the Minister of Defense in El Universal, 28 March 1962.
3. E.g., the testimony of a captured guerrilla reported in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. 43-45.
4. El Universal, 5 and 29 March 1962; La Esfera, 3 April 1962.
5. New York Times, 18 July 1962.

The essay into rural guerrilla warfare quickly turned into a series of almost unrelieved insurgent disasters. In most areas, the student guerrillas ran into a hostile peasantry which refused them food, informed the authorities of their whereabouts, and sometimes had to be restrained by police and military units from slaughtering the guerrillas with shotguns and machetes.<sup>1</sup> In some areas, the guerrillas fled from the peasantry and floundered about in wild and unpopulated mountain regions until government forces caught up with them and, in some instances, literally rescued them.<sup>2</sup> By early May 1962 the government had captured 143 guerrillas, while killing only seven. Casualties to government forces were announced as two dead, one wounded.

The guerrilla losses of materiel were correspondingly severe. The government announced capture of 51 rifles, 16 shotguns, 27 pistols and revolvers, 21 grenades, nearly 5,000 rounds of ammunition, and 193 dynamite cartridges. The guerrillas also lost a considerable quantity of camping equipment, radio equipment, food, and medical supplies.<sup>3</sup>

In only two areas — Falcón and El Charal — did any guerrillas survive initial defeats. The guerrilla leadership in these areas, as previously noted, included men with family connections among the local populations. This circumstance enabled them and a handful of followers to find shelter and concealment after government forces rounded up 71 of the guerrillas originally sent into Falcón and El Charal.<sup>4</sup>

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1. El Universal, 23 February; 2, 3, 5, and 29 March 1962; La Esfera, 3 and 7 April 1962.
  2. Some of the student guerrillas in El Charal were picked up half-dead from hunger; a few lost their lives or were seriously poisoned by eating toxic fruits. In Yaracuy one guerrilla group wandered aimlessly for 15 days, living only off monkey meat. Lack of water was a serious problem for guerrillas in several areas.
  3. Data on casualties, captures, etc., are derived from a Ministry of Defense communique published in El Universal and La Esfera, 9 May 1962.
  4. Castro-Communist guerrilla operations in Falcón and El Charal in 1962 and afterwards are the subject of special study in Chapters 12 and 13 of this report.

### Military Insurrection

The guerrilla disasters of early 1962 were tantamount to complete insurgent failure in Stage IV (rural guerrilla war) of their plan for "rapid victory." It must also have raised some serious questions within the insurgent camp as to whether the original timetable for victory in Venezuela by late 1962 did not require serious revision — and perhaps a fundamental rethinking of the entire insurgent effort.

At this moment, however, a new factor entered into the situation. The military officers who had agreed to lead the garrison revolts that were to mark the transition from Stage IV to Stage V in the insurgent plan made known their intention to carry forward with the revolts whether the Communist and MIR parties liked it or not.<sup>1</sup> Faced with this ultimatum, the insurgent leadership capitulated and agreed, in effect, to bypass Stage IV of the original strategy and to press towards final victory with military and urban insurgency means only.

The most useful tactic would now have been a simultaneous uprising by the two military garrisons — the Marine base at Carúpano and the Marine base at Puerto Cabello — whose officers were involved in the Castro-Communist conspiracy. This uprising, in its turn, could have been supported by urban insurgency violence on the grand scale envisioned in Stage V of the original "rapid victory" plan.

But a simultaneous uprising by the two Marine garrisons did not materialize. The commanding officer at Carúpano went prematurely into revolt on 4 May 1962 after his brother, another high-ranking Marine officer, was arrested in Caracas on charges of subversive conspiracy.<sup>2</sup> The rebel forces, consisting of 450 Marines and 50 National Guardsmen, were crushed within two days, at a cost of 40 dead and 50 wounded. Police action in Caracas and other

1. The decision of the military officers to press on with the garrison revolts, with or without civilian insurgency support, is noted in a Venezuelan Communist Party document reproduced in Chapter 3 of this report.

2. John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America, Stanford: The Stanford University Press, 1964, p. 111.

cities forestalled any attempt by urban insurgents to support the Carúpano uprising. The government also used the occasion to issue an executive decree which banned both the Communist and MIR parties from future political activity, including the right to present candidates in local and national elections.

The Marine garrison at Puerto Cabello went into revolt on 2 June 1962, almost a month after the Carúpano uprising. The rebel forces, this time consisting of 500 Marines and 100 civilian insurgents liberated from the Puerto Cabello prison, engaged in three days of savage street fighting before yielding to an overwhelming concentration of loyal government forces. The casualties in the Puerto Cabello revolt were said to run as high as 500 dead, but there was no companion outburst of urban insurgency on the grand scale for which the Castro-Communists hoped, and the uprising ended only as another costly insurgent defeat.

#### The Balance Sheet in June 1962

With the collapse of the Puerto Cabello revolt, the insurgent hopes of achieving "rapid victory" in Venezuela by the end of 1962 were clearly at an end. The rural guerrilla movement was already in ruins. The failures at Puerto Cabello and Carúpano had the effect of eliminating the only real support the Castro-Communists have ever awakened among the Venezuelan military. All that remained was the urban insurgency apparatus, still virtually intact and still ready for further action.

As the insurgents studied their mixed balance sheet of failure with rural guerrillas and military rebellion, relative success with urban riots and terrorism, a debate of major consequence broke out within their ranks. Some of the older Communist leaders urged abandonment of the entire insurgency campaign.<sup>1</sup> Another group attached great significance to the urban insurgency experience and the possibility that, by urban insurgency alone, a new campaign of violence could be launched that would drive President Betancourt from office. Still a third group emerged to claim that past events had proven the folly of ever hoping for "rapid victory" and to urge protracted rural guerrilla warfare as the only correct road for future insurgency in Venezuela.

i. Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, p. 95.

### Chapter 3

#### A COMMUNIST PROPOSAL FOR PROTRACTED WAR

(1962)

The debate which broke out among the Castro-Communists in Venezuela after the failure of the Puerto Cabello uprising led to the production of one of the most important insurgent documents which thus far has made its way into public print. The anonymous author was a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party and was probably one of the more important personages in the Party hierarchy. His document was written as a secret study paper which attempted to induce the Communist and MIR parties to abandon their hopes of "rapid victory" and to adopt a new strategy of protracted guerrilla war.<sup>1</sup>

The document, however, is not only a plea for protracted war. It is of even greater interest and value as a Communist critique of the insurgent attempt at "rapid victory" in 1960-1962. The author confirms, for example, that the Castro-Communists expected to win "rapid victory" through urban insurgency and military insurrection rather than rural guerrilla efforts. He charges that there was an absolute lack of comprehension in the insurgent

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1. The secret study paper was later seized and published by the Venezuelan Government; the full Spanish text appears in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 310-324, and in El Universal, 9 March 1963. The document's claim to authenticity rests upon the assertion of the Venezuelan Minister of Interior Relations that it was seized from the Communist Party. The document should not be regarded as an authorized statement of Party opinion, but rather as a study paper emanating from a faction in the Party which argued for protracted war against those who advocated a strategy aimed at "rapid victory." The author's familiarity with conditions in the Party's Central Committee, Politburo, etc., indicates that he was a high-ranking member of the Party hierarchy. Internal evidence suggests that the document was composed about November 1962, but the author himself notes that his views had been put forward on various previous occasions; on this basis, it is assumed that his arguments were current at least as early as the aftermath of the Puerto Cabello uprising in June 1962.

camp as to what the rural guerrillas were supposed to accomplish, an abominable choice of guerrilla personnel, and even a basic failure by the Venezuelan Communist Party to answer the question: "For what purpose do we have guerrilla fronts?"

The author also criticizes the lack of an adequate politico-military strategic plan that could have provided better direction to the insurgent effort and avoided such actions as the "free-wheeling adventurism" of the Carupano and Puerto Cabello military garrison revolts. He asserts the futility of such revolts against an Army so deeply penetrated as the Venezuelan by a U.S. military mission. He criticizes the "stupid terrorism" of some urban insurgency actions and says that they are sterilizing the revolutionary effort.

In various places of his text, the author also notes the organizational factors which contributed to the failure of the "rapid victory" effort. He claims that of 80 members of the Communist Central Committee, not even 10 actively engaged in the political and military labors needed to support the insurgent effort. He cites the existence within the Party of "effeminate Leninists" and "timid ones" who were opposed to the insurgent campaign or hesitated to have any part in it. He asserts that there was even no central political and military direction to the various insurgency actions, with the result that an "intolerable dispersal of effort" developed.

The Spanish language text of the original document is too long and repetitious for verbatim translation; it also enters into political discussions outside the scope of this report. In view of the importance of the document, however, the remainder of this chapter will consist of a condensed translation of those portions of the original which argue the case for protracted war and against a strategy aimed at "rapid victory." The language in the translation is essentially the author's own, although his lengthy Spanish sentences have been shortened to assist easier reading. Titles have been supplied to introduce the major sections of the document. The material has also been slightly rearranged to assist a smoother flow of thought.

The document opens with a Marxist analysis of the Venezuelan situation which leads the author to conclude that revolutionary armed struggle against the "oligarchic-imperialist" political order in Venezuela is necessary and justified. From this point forward, the author begins his argument for protracted war and contributes his many criticisms of the first insurgent attempt at "rapid victory."

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Keeping in mind that the means of achieving a revolutionary, democratic, and patriotic government in Venezuela must be those of armed fight, it is necessary to decide the proper character for that struggle. We find that there are two views on the matter. One upholds the possibility of rapid military victory (una rápida victoria militar). The other sees the struggle in the perspective of a protracted war (una guerra prolongada).

#### Erroneous Hope of Rapid Victory

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The theory of rapid victory maintains the following: (a) the Venezuelan crisis will be decided in the cities, especially Caracas; (b) military insurrection can provide the rapid victory. As the military insurrections at Carúpano and Puerto Cabello were based upon this theory, an analysis of these two events will throw sufficient light on the pros and cons of the rapid victory theory.

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Two fundamental objections can be made to the Carúpano and Puerto Cabello insurrections: one of a general political character, the other specifically military.

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From the political viewpoint, Carúpano and Puerto Cabello were the fruit of the lack of a coherent and articulated politico-military strategic plan that would have fixed goals and assigned tasks to each of our armed detachments. As a result, the two episodes corresponded neither to the political necessities of the moment nor to concrete reality. They were the product of an entirely subjective interpretation of the situation.

This type of military insurrection -- except in the case where we happen to control the big garrisons that can decide the situation with military means -- can only come as the crowning point to a popular insurrectionary process of great magnitude. The situation that prevailed in January 1962

T was exactly right for a military uprising.<sup>1</sup> But to bring about insurrections  
A of isolated garrisons in the absence of a popular uprising is nothing short of  
N pure attempt at a military coup. And when one cannot count on the big  
S garrisons that would assure triumph, then to raise up secondary garrisons  
L in the cold, and not as the fruit of a hot political and insurrectionary crisis,  
can only lead to ruin. The attempted coup in this case is only an adventure;  
and a revolutionary movement cannot tolerate adventures.

R From the military viewpoint also, these insurrections by isolated  
A garrisons serve no purpose. All they achieve is the concentration of an over-  
N whelming military force — and defeat. The only justification for the tactic  
S of the "revolutionary bastion" is to be found in its role as "the spark that  
L can set the prairie on fire." But in our case, the chance that this might  
happen was much too small; the margin for success was much too narrow.  
An uprising of "extremist" officers, as was the case in the related uprising  
of the two ports, would have had difficulty in unleashing the latent military  
crisis in Venezuela.<sup>2</sup>

A This observation does not deny, of course, that the government's  
T tactic of smashing the two insurrections "in a few hours" was related to the  
I fundamental objective of not allowing a prolonged resistance that would have  
O led to an explosion of the objective contradictions that do exist within the  
N Army. But both the history of our Army, and the deep penetration of it by  
the U. S. Military Mission, teach us that in spite of all the petty group  
interests that exist within it, this is an Army that unifies itself to smash any  
uprising by "extremist" officers. Not to believe this is simply to recite  
"theories" about a "military crisis" and to suffer from an optimism which  
the facts simply don't justify.

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1. The reference is to the riots and other violence provoked by the Castro-Communists in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities in the closing days of January 1962. See Chapter 2.
  2. The word "extremist" is often used in Venezuela to describe persons of the extreme political Right or Left who engage in insurgency attempts.

T      The only military and political justification for an uprising by an isolated garrison is within the framework of a protracted war. The summoning of garrisons to revolt should then be followed by immediate evacuation of the garrison cities so as to institute as soon as possible what Mao calls "quick-decision" mobile war. This is the concept of garrison revolt that would accord with the type of war that must be waged in our country.

R      And it is precisely because we have not decided for ourselves what we want to achieve in this war that acts of "free-wheeling" adventurism like the Carúpano and Puerto Cabello revolts have been allowed to flourish.

A      We can be sure that our officer comrades who placed us between the sword and the wall with their decision to start shooting with or without us would have spoken a different language if they had been confronted with a strategic plan for protracted war that would have opened up both military and political perspectives to them.

L      Necessity of Protracted War

A      The theory of protracted war is based upon consideration of the following factors. On the one hand, the current military weakness of our T revolutionary forces, a weakness that is relative and transitory, prevents I a rapid military victory. This weakness will be progressively reduced during O the course of a protracted war until it is transformed into superiority. On N the other hand, the fact that the revolutionary war is a just struggle by the forces of progress — with all that this statement implies from a political, popular, and international viewpoint — will prevent the oligarchic-imperialist forces from ever inflicting a decisive defeat on the revolutionary forces.

Let us now relate these general considerations to our actual situation. We find that the revolutionary forces are beginning the war with the following points of weakness:

1. Small number of men under arms.
2. Small amounts of arms and equipment.

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3. Great difficulties in acquiring large quantities of arms and equipment. (The revolutionary movement cannot count on the kind of help which Figueres and Larrazabal gave to Fidel; in addition, the delicate international situation seriously hinders the possibilities of aid from revolutionary and friendly countries.)<sup>1</sup>

4. Great logistical difficulties.

5. Problems with a peasant population that is completely deceived.<sup>2</sup>

These points of weakness on our side contrast with the strong points of the oligarchic-imperialist forces. We find that they possess:

1. A relatively large Army.

2. Arms and equipment in abundance.

3. The indiscriminate support of Yankee imperialism. (The recent Cuban crisis reveals that the rulers of Latin American countries have the same mentality as the rulers of Thailand or Cambodia when it comes to allowing the open presence of Yankee troops in our countries.)<sup>3</sup>

4. Great logistical facilities.

5. A certain measure of support from the peasantry.

The simple comparison of these factors shows how unreal are the theories of those who dream of a rapid military victory. The comparison

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1. Castro received aid from José Figueres of Costa Rica and from Rear Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal, head of the provisional regime which governed Venezuela in the period between the overthrow of the dictator Pérez Jiménez (January 1958) and Betancourt's accession to the presidency (February 1959).
2. The peasant population is probably described as "completely deceived" because of its strong electoral support for Betancourt and because of the assistance which it rendered to government forces which pursued the Castro-Communist guerrillas which appeared in Venezuela during the early part of 1962.
3. The Cuban crisis: i.e., the missile crisis of October 1962.

also indicates the only strategy that can lead the revolutionary forces to victory: protracted war, initiated and sustained over a long period by guerrilla warfare.

T Protracted war has also another aspect which cannot be under-  
estimated. There is no doubt that we revolutionaries must try to guide the  
R people to power along the road of least possible suffering and least possible  
A bloodshed. And this consideration involves a paradox that may seem  
foolish but is really dialectical. Once we have reached the conviction that  
the road to power in Venezuela is armed struggle, then it is protracted war  
that will cause the least suffering to the people.

N How can this be? Let us explain. An armed struggle will teach  
S the people much more than they can ever learn in long years of peaceful  
L political struggle — particularly in a milieu where imperialist propaganda  
A almost annuls the capacity for discernment and understanding. The armed  
T struggle will bring together in its terrible crucible the two great World  
I Concepts and will strip them of all propagandistic overtones, which is some-  
A thing that purely political activity cannot do in years and years of struggle.<sup>1</sup>  
T In effect, the process of armed fighting will radicalize the people, as the  
I recent experiences of Algeria and Cuba testify. It will make the people under-  
N stand the real nature of the world and its phenomena. It will make them want  
to grasp problems at their roots.

O A revolutionary government that is born of a long armed struggle  
N will thus have behind it a people steeled by suffering and — what is more  
important — a people converted to the most radical ideas. This government  
will have unrestricted support among the people to fight the only kind of  
opposition that can then appear: that of the oligarchic classes backed up by  
Yankee imperialism. Things will not fall so readily into line for a govern-  
ment that is born of rapid military victory and then has to deal with a people

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1. The reference to the two great World Concepts is obviously to the fundamental ideological differences between the Socialist and non-Socialist Worlds.

who have not been cleansed of demagoguery and the deceit of many years, and among whom important sectors still remain that can be led into opposition and struggle against the revolutionary government.

#### Need for Insurgent Reorganization

T Now it is necessary to draw some conclusions. In order to conduct  
R the revolutionary war, it is necessary to create a political organism that will  
A unify all the revolutionaries. The current political dispersal in the revo-  
N lutionary camp (Communists, MIR, independent revolutionary groups,  
military sectors, leftwing sectors of other political parties) creates great  
difficulties for the revolutionary action.

S The political organism should have an armed branch that will unify  
L and exercise sole direction of all the armed efforts which are currently being  
A undertaken in an uncoordinated manner. If it is considered that circumstances  
are not ripe for creation of a united political front, there can at least be no  
more delay in creating a unified military command to direct all the armed  
operations. The current dispersal of effort is already intolerable.

T The political front (or, in the last resort, the Communist Party)  
I must have a concrete political and military plan. This must be a plan that  
O will establish, clearly and resolutely, the political and military objectives  
N which we propose to gain, the means that are available, and the tasks which  
each of the armed forces must fulfill in each concrete case. It should be a  
plan that will end isolated and ill-conceived actions and open new vistas to  
our armed detachments which today are in danger of being sterilized by the  
stupid terrorism of the niples.<sup>1</sup>

The plan must immediately establish which is the principal form that the armed struggle must assume at this moment. We have already, on various occasions, expressed our ideas on guerrilla warfare. Now we will be more precise.

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1. Niple: a home-made pipe bomb often exploded for random terror effect by Castro-Communist insurgents in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities.

## Guerrillas the Fundamental Weapon

T In the first stage, and for a long period, the war of national liberation in our country will depend upon the action of the rural guerrilla detachments. In my opinion, therefore, the principal stress in our preparation for armed struggle must be placed upon the creation, maintenance, stabilization, and consolidation of the guerrilla fronts.

R This is not to say that at this particular moment the guerrillas are the fundamental form which the dispute for power in our country has assumed.  
A It is only the recognition that in the strategic plan it must be the guerrillas  
N who are the fundamental factor in the armed struggle because they are the embryo of a regular revolutionary army.

S Why guerrillas ?

L The first reason is our military weakness. The only way in which  
A inferior forces can confront superior forces with any possibility of success  
is by recourse to guerrilla warfare. It seems unnecessary to argue this point  
further.

T The second reason is that only through guerrilla warfare can we  
I give body to the popular army that will eventually be capable of defeating the  
O oligarchic-imperialist Army. The process of armed struggle is going to trans-  
form the little guerrilla detachments into units of a regular army, capable of  
engaging in conventional war and decisive battles. But for this purpose, the  
N mountains must be our garrisons and our training camps; this is a service  
of rural as against urban guerrillas. The people must have a real power base.

We also affirm that social conditions in Venezuela are favorable to the guerrilla struggle. In making this declaration we depart to some extent, it is true, from "Che" Guevara's opinion that guerrilla action is impossible in a country where there is still the least margin for a civic and

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legal struggle.<sup>1</sup> But Guevara's point, although correct, is not absolutely so. In the majority of Latin American countries, "political liberty" frequently means nothing to the vast popular masses which are so miserable and outcast that the great concepts of representative democracy seem to them as only empty mouthings. Lack of political liberty may arouse the urban stratas of the population, especially the petty bourgeoisie, but the same thing does not occur among the peasant masses whose absence from purely political struggles is notorious. To the peasants there is no difference between dictatorship and democracy: their material condition remains the same, and their cultural and political retardation are such that freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly are completely useless to them and have no meaning for them.

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But the peasant masses and the poorest strata of the urban population are very much alive to proposals of a social character. They react in a very positive manner when called upon to fight for concrete things like land or bread. This is particularly true — as our guerrilla experiences have shown — if the call to combat does not come from the traditional demagogues, but from a new kind of politician: the armed politicians.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we affirm that the social conditions in Venezuela are favorable to guerrilla combat, regardless of whether the legal opportunities for struggle do or do not disappear, and that we must hasten to establish guerrilla warfare as the principal mode of struggle by the Venezuelan people.

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1. "If a government has come to power through some form of popular vote, whether fraudulent or not, and if that government maintains at least the appearance of constitutional law, a guerrilla uprising cannot be brought about until all possible avenues of legal procedure have been adopted." Guevara, On Guerrilla Warfare (Praeger edition), p. 5.
  2. This sentence must be taken more as a reflection of the author's wishful thinking than a statement of the actual "guerrilla experiences" in Venezuela as of 1962. The author himself has earlier noted the problems faced by the insurgents in dealing with "a completely deceived peasantry."

### Secondary Role of Urban Insurgency

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This does not mean, of course, that we should liquidate the urban tactical units (UTCs). On the contrary, it asserts the need for their improvement. The action of the UTCs will help to disperse the enemy forces and to relieve pressure on the guerrilla zones. Urban fighting and sabotage are therefore extremely important. The guerrilla fronts should count on the invaluable assistance which the UTCs can give them.

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We may even state that the urban guerrillas are a notable and special feature of the Venezuelan revolutionary movement. In Cuba, they never achieved the level of stability and organization which they now possess in our country. This is a revolutionary experience of incalculable value.

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But it is also an experience that we must evaluate correctly. We should not despise the urban guerrillas merely to achieve the mechanical transplantation of foreign revolutionary experiences, specifically the Cuban. On the other hand, we must not so overestimate the urban guerrillas as to forget that they are only an auxiliary to the rural guerrilla movement even though, in the beginning, the exploits of the urban guerrillas may sometimes appear more spectacular and brilliant.

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### Analysis of Guerrilla Experiences

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Objections are nonetheless being made to guerrilla warfare which, at bottom, are related to some of our own negative experiences with this type of combat. This makes it necessary for us to compile a balance sheet of our months of guerrilla struggle, partly in order to reply to the "detractors," partly to make a critical evaluation of our achievements in this area.

The causes which explain our defeats are as follows. The light-hearted and sporting concept of the guerrilla fronts. The idealization of guerrilla war. The absolute lack of any idea as to the kind of war that was to be fought. What was the reply to the question: "For what purpose do we have the guerrilla fronts?" Only the vague statements of the III Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

And then there was the abominable choice of guerrilla personnel — if we can give this name to a process that in reality was neither choice nor selection. The basic cause of the defeats at Aroa and Humocaro, and of the problems which Pablo has faced, is the wretched human resources that had to be relied upon. And there is the Falcón experience.<sup>1</sup>

T        Also the lack of liaison between the guerrilla fronts and the regional organisms of the Party. Also the Politburo's lack of comprehension R        as to the capabilities of the guerrilla fronts. Also the mistaken tactic which kept us from ever assuming the initiative and always kept us waiting for the A        Army's attack.

N        Finally, the errors committed by the commanders of the guerrilla S        fronts. These errors were inevitable; but they would not have had such L        serious consequence were it not for the other factors already mentioned.

L        On the other hand, there are magnificent positive experiences which point to the brilliant future of the guerrilla movement in our country.

A        Some of the fronts have survived and thus have demonstrated the T        possibility of survival.<sup>2</sup> It is true that up to now the fronts have not had to face anything more than police actions, including the Army operations against I        them. But the next step, encirclement, is only one grade beyond police O        action, and we already know that encirclements can be overcome.

I        Some of the fronts have also demonstrated that Mao's phrase, O        "the guerrilla must move like a fish in the water," does not have to be interpreted N        as meaning that the guerrilla from the moment of his birth is going to encounter a human milieu of solidarity and friendship. The correct way to

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1. The author refers in this passage to the complete collapse of the guerrilla movement in the Sierra Aroa of Yaracuy State and to the defeats suffered by the El Charal guerrillas in the Humocaros area of Lara State. "Pablo" is Juan Vicente Cabezas, the principal guerrilla leader in the El Charal region. The reference to Falcón is unclear but presumably refers to the serious setbacks also encountered in 1962 by guerrillas in Falcón State.
  2. Two fronts survived out of the eight originally sent into action: one in Falcón, the other in El Charal.

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interpret Mao's phrase is dynamic: the guerrilla himself creates the conditions that enable him to move like a fish in water. Experience has shown that once the peasant crust of indifference or distrust is penetrated, this "peasant adeco majority" will cement itself enthusiastically around the guerrillas.<sup>1</sup> We further note that some guerrilla fronts already have created the conditions for resolving their logistical problems.

### Future Course of Guerrilla War

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Therefore, in view of the positive experiences of the guerrilla movement, we believe that the war for national liberation in Venezuela will probably go through three stages in the course of its development.

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In the first stage, our principal form of struggle will be guerrilla war. The enemy will be on the strategic offensive and we on the strategic defensive. This strategic defensive presupposes a tactical offensive and an active defense.

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The second stage will be a kind of strategic stalemate. It will differ from the second stage indicated by Mao for the anti-Japanese war in that this will not be a stage in which the enemy consolidates his positions, but we consolidate ours.

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The second stage will also entail preparation for the third stage, towards which the transition will be gradual. The principal form of struggle will be guerrilla war and eventually, though as an auxiliary, a war of maneuvers.

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The third stage will be the one in which we take the strategic offensive, perhaps not in the sense of a general counteroffensive (for we may

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1. "Peasant adeco majority": the reference is to the fact that a great majority of the Venezuelan peasantry voted in the elections of December 1958 for President Betancourt and for the candidates of Betancourt's political party, Acción Democrática (AD). Supporters of Acción Democrática are often called "adecons" in Venezuela — i.e., "AD'ers."

not be strong enough for that), but certainly in the form of offensive campaigns that will create the conditions for a decisive battle. The principal form of struggle will be the war of maneuvers, with guerrillas as an extremely important auxiliary. In reality, it will be guerrilla war on a higher plane.

But let there be no illusions among the Venezuelan people or its armed fighters as to the character of the war. It will not only be a protracted war; it will be a ferocious war in which the enemy will not observe any of the conventions of war. It will require great capacity for sacrifice, great fighting spirit, and strong resolution to achieve the possibility of a victory that will cost painful losses and untold suffering.

Remember also that Venezuela is the most precious jewel in the Yankee imperial crown: it is a great source of iron and petroleum, an important market for Yankee exports, a country which occupies a privileged strategic position in the Caribbean, in South America, and with respect to the Panama Canal. It is not a country that imperialism will be disposed to surrender without an armed fight. Rivers of blood will have to flow before the surrender is achieved.

We must further put aside our illusions that the Venezuelan oligarchy and its political and military agents will not fight. No social class ever surrenders its privileges without fighting. Our oligarchy and our Army are going to fight — and in many cases they will fight valiantly.

It is true that imperialism and the oligarchy are paper tigers. But this is a strategic consideration. On the tactical level, they are really tigers. Each concrete battle against these tigers must be carefully studied beforehand, efficiently prepared, decisively undertaken.

#### Role of the Communist Party

Finally, some words about our Party. It is the ultima ratio for all the errors and deficiencies that can be pointed out in the way the armed struggle has been conducted in our country.

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In our Party there exists today a nucleus which is completely won over to the armed struggle and a sector which does not understand the reasons for the fight and therefore hesitates when confronted by it. So far as the nucleus is concerned, it is clear that it has arrived at a new set of ideas that are compatible with reality. It has thrown off the subjectivism that characterized our actions in March, April, May and June of the year.<sup>1</sup> The nucleus must gain the Party over to its way of thinking, and the best way to do it is to draw the appropriate conclusions from the following facts:

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1. Of the 80 members of the Central Committee, only ONE at this moment is in the field with the guerrillas.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Only TWO participated as leaders in the Carúpano and Puerto Cabello insurrections.

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3. Not even 10 are engaged in the labor of supporting the armed struggle on a national scale.

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Other factors must be noted. There is an excessive centralization of the labors in behalf of the armed struggle and a growing under-employment of many cadres. This is simply a case of not knowing how to organize the work, and it must be corrected.

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There is a surplus of Politburo members in Caracas, while in many other places we do not have exactly the best kind of cadres to direct the effort. The guerrilla war is not going to unfold in Caracas, but the interior, and that is where the directors of the Party must be.

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Today, as never before, we also need a Central Committee that is in active operation. It is precisely when we are in these stages when the paths are not entirely clear that the collective labor of the Central Committee is indispensable. But the Central Committee has failed in its task. It

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1. The author refers to the period of March-June 1962 in which the Castro-Communist guerrillas in Venezuela met disaster and the Carúpano and Puerto Cabello military garrison revolts were crushed.
  2. The ONE is Douglas Bravo, a guerrilla leader in Falcón State.

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continues to be only a formal apparatus that confirms the decisions of the Politburo. In addition to giving the Central Committee its true worth, we need to make some changes in its membership, as in that of the Politburo.

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From October 1960 until now, we have lived through starry years.  
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We have fought beautiful battles and we have begun to lay out a program that will carry us to power. We are an exception to the opportunistic decay and to the ideological and political chattering which afflict all the Communist Parties of the world that are not truly Socialist.<sup>1</sup> Once and for all, our Party N has taken the problem of the conquest of power as the central point of its political action. It has achieved the greatest conquest in its long history: S the meshing of revolutionary practice with revolutionary theory.

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Errors have been committed. There have been faults. We have received some hard knocks. There still exists little clarity about fundamental A concepts. Nobody can deny it. But these were faults and errors committed in the course of battle — and the battle itself will correct them.

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But precisely because we have received hard knocks, precisely I because the future is uncertain and full of dangers, we must guard ourselves O today against the "cry-babies" and the "timid ones" who are always ready to say: "I told you so, I warned you, I told you not to do that." And we must N guard against those who speak of "terrorist deviation" so as to hide their own lack of courage. Into the faces of the "cry-babies," "the timid ones," the effeminate "Leninists" who theorize about terrorism, let us throw the phrase of Unamuno: "There is only one way to hit the nail on the head . . . and that is to hit a hundred times."<sup>2</sup>

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1. This sentence is probably a reference to the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and Communist China over the proper methods of waging world revolution.

2. Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), Spanish philosopher and man of letters.

T

It was not a mistake to dig up the battle-ax; the mistake was only that we did not have sufficiently clear heads when we did so. We struck like blind men. But this was not entirely wrong either: we lived in a process in which there was a quantitative accumulation of experiences. Now we have come to the point where the disorder and confusion of the previous months must be overcome, under pain of paying the harsh price of total defeat.

R

The forthcoming reunion of the Central Committee must therefore bring about the qualitative leap forward in the organization and conduct of the armed struggle in our country which the moment requires.

A

N

Cadres of the Politburo must go out to direct the basic zones of the country, especially those which are the scene of the armed struggle.

S

It is necessary to reinforce some of the basic regions and give them complete cadres, not merely isolated ones.

L

It is indispensable that we reinforce the guerrilla detachments with personnel who are politically enlightened. The detachments must also be reconstructed in accordance with sound criteria — e.g., the lack of a doctor is intolerable.

T

We must appoint a group that will take charge of everything relating to the guerrilla detachments and put an end to the individual efforts that exist today. This commission must attend to the following: supplies, arms, publicity, a National Officers' School, and a National School for Combatants.

O

N

## Chapter 4

### THE SECOND INSURGENT ATTEMPT AT RAPID VICTORY

(1962 - 1963)

In Summer 1962 police at Caracas noted a sudden increase in the number of bank robberies and the appearance of a new kind of thievery which specialized in radio communications equipment, camping equipment, canned goods, mimeographs, and military uniforms. Pharmacies previously robbed only for money and narcotics began to report losses of first aid and minor surgical supplies. False agents of the security police (DIGEPOL) and the Armed Forces Intelligence Service (SIFA) entered private homes of military officers in search of arms and uniforms.<sup>1</sup>

The government reported that Castro-Communist terrorists were responsible for much of the upsurge in crime, either as direct participants or as receivers of articles stolen by common thieves.<sup>2</sup> Other developments indicated that steps were underway to reinforce the small guerrilla bands which clung to a furtive existence in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela. In July 1962 a Deputy to the National Congress resigned his seat and went to join the guerrillas of El Charal. Other recruits, including two doctors, made their way to the Falcón guerrillas.

Preparations for a second round of Castro-Communist insurgency violence in Venezuela were thus discernible as of Summer 1962. But the strategy that guided the new insurgent effort would not be protracted war. Instead, the insurgents once more turned to a strategy aimed at "rapid victory."

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1. Statement of the Minister of Interior Relations in El Universal, 18 July 1962; also El Nacional, 22 September 1962.
  2. The evidence of Castro-Communist participation in common crime included captured guerrilla correspondence which alluded to funds acquired from bank robberies. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. 293-296.

### The New Strategy for Rapid Victory

The considerations which impelled the Castro-Communists into a second quest for "rapid victory" were probably, in largest part, political. As of Summer 1962, Rómulo Betancourt was nearing his goal of becoming the first democratically-elected president in Venezuelan history to complete a full constitutional term in office (February 1959-March 1964).<sup>1</sup> It was generally accepted that if Betancourt filled out his term, and turned over power to a duly elected successor, the new system of political democracy in Venezuela would be strengthened and the danger of Castro-Communist takeover reduced.

The one thing that the advocates of protracted war could not promise their fellow insurgents was that concentration on renewal of rural guerrilla warfare could produce enough results before February 1964 to threaten Betancourt's prospects of completing his constitutional term as president. On the contrary, those who argued for protracted war candidly acknowledged that if their strategy was adopted, the insurgents would have to accept the possibility that Betancourt would complete his presidential term and turn over power to an elected successor. They urged the Castro-Communists to regard this eventuality as only "a mere incident" which should not distract them from the more important task of building up guerrilla forces as the embryo of a future revolutionary army.<sup>2</sup>

To others in the insurgent camp, and to the dominant faction as it proved, this dismissal of the political problem posed by Betancourt's continued stay in office was unrealistic. Something would have to be done, by means

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1. As noted in Chapter 1, Venezuela has been governed for nearly all its history as an independent nation by a succession of dictators and military autocrats. The only democratically-elected president prior to Betancourt was Rómulo Gallegos, who took office in February 1948 and was ousted by a military coup d'etat in November 1948.
  2. Venezuelan Communist Party study paper on protracted war, dated late 1962, and reproduced in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 310-324. (This is the same document extensively quoted in Chapter 3 of this report.)

nore expeditious than guerrilla warfare, to force Betancourt out of the presidency and thereby plunge the nation into turmoil, or else the weakness of the insurgent camp would be exposed. As one Communist Party strategy paper remarked apropos the political situation: "It is correct to regard the present crisis as a definitive crisis."<sup>1</sup>

The Castro-Communists in Venezuela therefore turned away from a strategy of protracted war in late 1962 and resolved to channel their main energies into a second "rapid victory" strategy aimed at violent overthrow of the Betancourt Government before the completion of its constitutional term in office.<sup>2</sup> The new insurgent campaign would involve acts of terrorism, sabotage, and arson on a scale never before witnessed in the country. It was planned to extend the violence over many months, until the presidential elections of December 1963 if necessary, so as to intimidate and paralyze the nation and undermine popular confidence in the peacekeeping abilities of the Betancourt Government.<sup>3</sup>

Ideally, the insurgents hoped for one of two results from the terror campaign. If the government tried to maintain its character as a democracy

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1. Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper, quoted in El Nacional, 25 February 1963.
  2. The Castro-Communists did not formally reject protracted war as their insurgency strategy in late 1962. Instead, in an apparent effort to placate all factions in the insurgent camp, it was agreed to call the effort to overthrow Betancourt by the title of "protracted war." But the hollowness of this compromise was indicated by the insurgent decision to concentrate their main energies on overthrowing the President rather than reviving the rural guerrilla effort. As a Venezuelan Communist later remarked, "in practice, the tactics were divorced from the strategy." Quoted in El Nacional, 19 July 1964.
  3. This description of the insurgent plan does not appear in any of the Communist and MIR party documents which have found their way into public print. It accords, however, with the pattern of insurgency events in Venezuela during late 1962 and 1963; also with the analyses of the insurgent strategy by Venezuelan government officials. E.g., the letter of the Minister of Interior Relations in El Nacional, 30 April 1963.

by using only legal methods of repression against the terrorists, the Venezuelan military might decide that the government's response was too feeble, that the nation's safety was in danger, and that it was necessary to get rid of Betancourt and assume power through a coup d'etat. Alternatively, if the government cast aside legal restraints and met terror with terror, it would lose its democratic character and might be overthrown by a popular revolt.<sup>1</sup>

The insurgents did not expect, however, that the mere overthrow of Betancourt would be enough to bring them to "rapid victory" in Venezuela. Their hope was rather to trigger a revolt against Betancourt, then come to victory in the period of national crisis which they anticipated would result from Betancourt's overthrow. As a Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper declared: "The fall of R.B. [Rómulo Betancourt] is not our access to Power. But it will open up another crisis that will lead to this. Therefore increase the possibilities for R.B.'s overthrow. . . . Accent the political action of the Party: move the masses, peacefully or violently, to overthrow R.B."<sup>2</sup>

But the insurgents were also prepared for the possibility that urban terrorism would not be enough to bring down Betancourt. It was recognized that the President was a formidable adversary who might find ways to avoid the trap set for him. As another Communist Party strategy paper remarked, "We have been in the habit of talking much too lightly about the government. . . We have said that it lacks any support; and this is not necessarily the case. On the contrary, economically and militarily speaking, this government can count on the most powerful endorsement and on larger resources than any other group which participates in the political life of the nation."<sup>3</sup>

1. The hope that renewed insurgency could induce Betancourt's overthrow by military coup d'etat or popular revolt is expressed in a Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper quoted in El Nacional, 25 February 1963.

2. Quoted in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 130.

3. Quoted in El Nacional, 25 February 1963.

Accordingly, it was resolved that if Betancourt did not fall prior to the December 1963 elections, the insurgent attack would escalate during the closing weeks of 1963 into a massive burst of terrorism and civil war that would prevent the holding of the elections or frighten great numbers of Venezuelan citizens into not voting on Election Day. This final effort was intended to ward off the one political development which the insurgents feared more than Betancourt's completion of his term as president: the spectacle of millions of Venezuelan voters demonstrating their allegiance to democracy, and indirectly their repudiation of Castro-Communism, by voting in the December elections. The importance which the insurgents attached to disruption of the electoral process was indicated in a Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper which declared: "The electoral process will deepen the electoral illusions of the people. . . . It will contribute to maintain the stability of the government and to torpedo the path of the armed fight. . . . Whatever else happens, the great revolutionary juncture in our country will be the culmination of the election campaign."<sup>1</sup>

What result did the insurgents expect if they prevented the December elections or induced mass voter abstention? Although no answer to this question appears in the Communist and MIR party documents that have made their way into public print, it is probable that the Venezuelan insurgents were influenced by the example of Fidel Castro's "no election" proclamation which demanded a popular boycott of the Cuban presidential election of November 1958. The abstention of great numbers of Cubans from the polls in response to Castro's command was one of the most telling insurgent blows in Cuba; it was followed only a few weeks later by the disintegration of the Batista regime and final insurgent victory.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Quoted in El Nacional, 25 February 1963.

2. Jules Dubois, Fidel Castro, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1959, pp. 315-317, 327-328.

The Castro-Communist decision to oppose the December 1963 elections by force of arms was not unanimous. One Communist Party strategy paper, for example, warned the insurgents: "We cannot employ violent resistance against the elections because that will isolate us from the masses."<sup>1</sup> But the advice went unheeded; the strategy remained as described. If not Betancourt, then the elections.<sup>2</sup>

#### Primary Role of Urban Insurgency

The new strategy of "rapid victory" also led to a fundamental shift in insurgency tactics. In 1960-1962 the Castro-Communists had attempted a takeover of Venezuela through a combination of urban insurgency, military insurrection, and rural guerrilla warfare. In 1962-1963 the insurgents no longer had military allies or a significant rural guerrilla movement at their disposal, but they did possess an urban insurgency apparatus which some observers estimated to number as many as 600 to 1,000 men.<sup>3</sup> The urban insurgents were therefore called upon to lead and give substance to the new Castro-Communist attack; and as the strategy was now one that emphasized political and psychological victory through terror, the cities of Venezuela with their concentrated human masses provided the most advantageous arena for the unfolding of the new insurgency campaign.

Urban insurgency therefore came to hold the primary strategic role in the second Castro-Communist thrust towards "rapid victory." The main focus of the attack would be Caracas, the largest city and political nerve center of the country. Acts of terrorism were also to develop in unprecedented and mounting number in the major cities spread across the

1. Quoted in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 175.

2. The decision to oppose the elections by force of arms was announced as early as "January 10" in the clandestine insurgent newspaper, Pueblo y Revolución. Quoted in Radio Peking broadcast, 6 February 1963.

3. New York Times, 3 November 1963.

northern rim of Venezuela, from Carúpano and Maturín in the east to Barquisimeto and Maracaibo in the west.

The urban insurgency campaign was conceived and implemented as a two-stage effort. For more than a year, from late Summer 1962 into Autumn 1963, the insurgents would concentrate on terrorism, sabotage, arson, and robbery. This was intended to induce a psychological atmosphere of anxiety and foreboding in the country, which the Castro-Communists hoped would lead to a military coup d'état or popular revolt against the Betancourt Government.

The main insurgent strength would not be committed to the first stage campaign. It would be held back, and husbanded, in anticipation of the supreme insurrectionary effort that would be required to prevent or disrupt the December 1963 elections. As a Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper remarked: "Whatever else happens, the great revolutionary juncture in our country will be the culmination of the election campaign. . . . It would be stupid on our part to attempt any revolutionary action before that epoch; we would fail, and possibly we would retard the maturation of the objective conditions for revolutionary action"<sup>1</sup>

In Autumn 1963, if the Betancourt Government still remained in power, the Castro-Communists would implement the second-stage urban insurgency effort. This called for a final upsurge in incidents of terrorism, sabotage, arson, street violence, and sniper and bombing attacks in the major cities of the country. In a companion stroke, the insurgents planned to launch an all-out civil war in Caracas with the aid of mortars, recoilless rifles, bazookas, and other arms smuggled in from Cuba. Preparations for the Caracas uprising were entrusted to Luis E. Sánchez Madero, a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party who went to Cuba in 1962 and returned secretly to Caracas in March 1963.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Quoted in El Nacional, 25 February 1963.

2. Sánchez Madero's key role in the plan for civil war in Caracas is noted in the report of the OAS committee which investigated the Cuban arms cache found in Venezuela in November 1963.

The primary strategic role of urban insurgency in the second Castro-Communist drive towards "rapid victory" in Venezuela was also indicated by the attention which the insurgents gave in late 1962 and 1963 to continuance of their rural guerrilla effort. Supplies and reinforcements were sent to the still surviving guerrilla bands in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela; and the two guerrilla "fronts" were encouraged into minor flurries of activity which won newspaper headlines and drew down Army and police counterattacks. But it is noteworthy that during the entire course of the second "rapid victory" campaign, the insurgents made no effort at sustained guerrilla action in any part of rural Venezuela except Falcón and El Charal. In the final days of struggle against the December 1963 elections, some of the Falcón guerrillas even came down from the mountains to assume the role of urban terrorists.<sup>1</sup>

The insurgents were not blind, however, to the psychological value of having it appear that the renewed insurgency attack on the Betancourt Government was supported not only by urban terrorists but by expanded guerrilla action in the rural areas of Venezuela. To this end, they often sent urban-based terrorists on swift automobile raids against isolated villages and other rural targets. Other terrorists were converted into so-called "weekend guerrillas" who would operate briefly in a rural area, usually with the aid of automobiles, and then retreat to urban hideouts. As these terrorist operations were sometimes mistaken for guerrilla actions, the Venezuelan

1. El Universal, 19 and 20 November 1963. One of the reasons why the Castro-Communists kept the guerrillas of Falcón and El Charal in action was the belief that although the guerrillas would have a negligible role in the fight against Betancourt and the elections, they might assume greater strategic importance in a post-Betancourt era when the guerrillas could either be used as the embryo of a revolutionary army or as a means of extorting concessions from other political parties. This thought was expressed in a Venezuelan Communist Party strategy paper of late 1962 which remarked: "The guerrillas are not on the fundamental plane in the current crisis. They are to form our revolutionary army, to be a base on which we can negotiate." Quoted in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 130.

public and the outside world were sometimes led to form an exaggerated impression of the strength and ubiquity of the rural guerrilla movement.<sup>1</sup>

In thus placing so much emphasis on urban and urban-rural insurgency, the Venezuelan insurgents departed for the second time from the Guevara doctrine that rural guerrilla war should be the primary mode of insurgency struggle in Latin America. This divergence was openly acknowledged — even to the point where some Venezuelan insurgents implied that they expected to achieve victory by urban insurgency means alone, or with practically no help from rural guerrillas. One Castro-Communist spokesman referred in early 1963 to the urban insurgents as "the soul of the revolutionary movement" and commented that the mountains were not playing the same "specific role" in the Venezuelan Revolution as did the Sierra Maestra in the Cuban Revolution.<sup>2</sup> A terrorist commander in Caracas told a Communist journalist that insurgent capture of Miraflores, the presidential palace in Caracas, could be "a sudden thing based upon intensified development of the armed struggle in the cities." It was quite possible, he said, that the guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal might one day receive a message from the urban insurgents which read: "Come ahead. We already hold Miraflores in our hands."<sup>3</sup>

Guevara's doubts concerning the wisdom of the Venezuelan insurgent strategy were probably reflected in a long article on revolutionary war published

1. One foreign observer who was impressed with the ubiquity of the Venezuelan "guerrillas," yet found it difficult to explain in satisfactory terms, was the Soviet writer, V. Listov. "At present there are several strong centres of the guerrilla movement in the country. . . . Judging by press reports, at the present stage the guerrillas are not trying to establish 'liberated areas.' They prefer to operate in different localities, swiftly moving from one district to another. Mobility is the most characteristic feature of all the guerrilla 'fronts'." V. Listov, "Venezuelan Guerrillas," International Affairs (Moscow), December 1963, p. 57.
2. Statement of Brachio Montiel, President of the Cuban-Venezuelan Institute for Revolutionary Solidarity in Havana, as quoted in Hoy (Havana), 1 February 1963, p. 3.
3. Quoted in an article on the Falcón guerrillas by Luciano Cruz published in Hoy (Havana), 1 September 1963.

in Summer 1963. He asserted that although victory in Latin America through urban insurgency was theoretically possible, the odds against it were exceedingly great because of the ease with which the government forces could eliminate urban insurgents through betrayal and repeated raids. "These are the considerations," he continued, "that make us believe that even in countries where the predominance of the cities is great, the central political forces of the struggle can develop in the countryside. . . . So far as the large urban concentrations are concerned, in our humble opinion, even in these cases it may be advisable to engage in a struggle outside city limits in a way that can continue for a long time."<sup>1</sup>

Fidel Castro, on the other hand, was probably only too willing to assist the Venezuelan insurgents in their plan for "rapid victory" through urban insurrection. The mortars, recoilless rifles, bazookas, and other arms needed to implement the plan for civil war in Caracas were smuggled in from Cuba to an isolated beach on the ocean coast of Falcón State. No Cuban arms were sent to the rural guerrillas of Falcón, even though these were operating less than 100 miles from the arms landing site.

#### First Urban Terror Campaign

The Castro-Communist effort to overthrow the Betancourt Government by urban insurgency began in earnest during Autumn 1962. In late September and early October, a coordinated outburst of terrorist violence was launched in Caracas and other cities in an effort to undermine public confidence in the government and induce a military or civilian revolt. When this initiative failed, another and much larger burst of urban violence occurred in January-February 1963. After this initiative also failed, the attack again slackened as the insurgents prepared for the all-out campaign of urban terror

1. This statement appears in an article by Guevara entitled "Cuba — Exceptional Case?" which appeared in an unidentified Cuban publication and was broadcast by Radio Havana on 17 August 1963.

and insurrection in late 1963 which they hoped would finally topple the government and/or disrupt the elections scheduled for 1 December 1963.<sup>1</sup>

The ability of the insurgents to pace and control the campaign of urban violence was probably attributable to a reorganization which took place among the insurgent forces during late 1962. All effectives, urban terrorists and rural guerrillas, were enrolled into a new clandestine army, the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), and were brought for the first time under centralized military command. The FALN, in turn, was attached to the National Front of Liberation (FLN), a political organism which the insurgents also created in late 1962 in a largely fruitless effort to induce other political groups to join the Castro-Communists in the insurgency fight.

The types of urban terrorist violence employed by the FALN in efforts of late 1962 and 1963 to bring down the Betancourt Government are indicated in Table I, which lists all terrorist incidents reported in two leading Caracas newspapers for the period 13 September -- 31 October 1962. This was the largest sustained terrorist outburst which the country had yet witnessed and included several attacks on U. S. business enterprises. The terrorism was accompanied by a number of goading attacks on military personnel and, on 4 October, by an appeal by clandestine radio for a popular revolt against the government.

Venezuelan cities were allowed two months of relative tranquillity after October 1962, but the population was kept mindful of the FALN presence by a nagging series of terrorist actions. In January-February 1963, Caracas bore the main burden of the second major terrorist outburst. On this occasion, the FALN carried out a number of spectacular actions that won it worldwide attention. These included the theft of visiting French art masterpieces from a Caracas museum, the hijacking of a Venezuelan freighter on the high seas, and a \$4,500,000 fire which destroyed the principal Sears warehouse in Caracas.

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1. The ebbs and flows of urban insurgency violence in Venezuela during late 1962 and 1963 are indicated in the fold-out chart appended to Chapter 11 of this report.

Table I

URBAN AND URBAN-BASED INSURGENCY INCIDENTS  
IN VENEZUELA, 13 SEPTEMBER - 31 OCTOBER 1962

- September 13 - Policeman and a police patrol in Caracas are attacked with submachinegun fire.
- September 14 - Police patrol in Barquisimeto is attacked with gunfire.
- September 14 - Judge investigating terrorist assassination is threatened with death.
- September 16 - Peasant warning to police frustrates terrorist attack on Socony Oil pipeline in plains region east of Barquisimeto.
- September 17 - Estimated 200 Communist youths demonstrate and riot in Caracas; one is killed.
- September 17 - Eight armed men seize radio station in Valencia.
- September 18 - Terrorists attack office of the Military Directorate of Justice for third time, kill guard, wound three military policemen.
- September 18 - Bomb is found in Caracas radio station.
- September 18 - Terrorists armed with submachine guns attack bank truck in Caracas; three persons are killed.
- September 18 - Terrorists provoke street violence and gunfire in a Caracas neighborhood; one person is killed, three wounded.
- September 19 - Policeman is seriously wounded by bomb explosion in Barcelona.
- September 20 - Terrorists fire submachinegun blasts at offices of Colgate-Palmolive factory and a cement factory in Valencia.
- September 20 - Bomb is found in political party office in Caracas.
- September 20 - Terrorists submachinegun home of Prefect in Valencia for the second straight day.
- September 21 - Bombs are thrown into political party meeting in La Guaira.
- September 21 - Two bombs are discovered in gas works at Puerto Cabello.
- September 21 - Two bombs explode in Caracas bus station.

Table I (continued)

- September 22 - Terrorists attack home of policeman in Valencia.
- September 22 - Terrorists inflict serious injuries on man who refuses to place bomb in Caracas supermarket.
- September 23 - Bomb explodes in municipal government office at Caracas.
- September 24 - Terrorists set fire to oil pipeline near Maracaibo.
- September 25 - Three terrorists break into home of retired military officer in town near Caracas and steal arms.
- September 25 - Terrorists attack and try to burn three buses in Caracas; small bombs are found in large office building.
- September 26 - Terrorists attack Coca-Cola plant in Caracas, burn three trucks, wound guard.
- September 26 - Bomb explodes in automobile at Barcelona.
- September 27 - Police capture 5 terrorists in Caracas after gunfight in streets.
- September 27 - Bomb explodes in trade union office at Caracas; another in a secondary school.
- September 27 - Terrorist group is captured trying to assassinate policeman in Caracas; members of group are accused of complicity in murders of 14 policemen.
- September 28 - Terrorists try to intercept and burn oil tank truck near Maracaibo.
- September 28 - Guard is wounded in terrorist attack on political party office in Caracas.
- September 29 - Bomb explodes in Caracas neighborhood.
- October 1 - A force of 35 to 40 armed terrorists, moving by automobiles and trucks from Caracas, briefly seizes the village of El Hatillo in Miranda State. They surprise and disarm the local police, cut communications lines, burn a local political party office, and paint signs advertising the operation as the work of the Castro-Communist "revolutionary army."

Table I (continued)

- October 1 - Bomb explodes in political party office in town near Maracaibo.
- October 1 - Terrorists fire shots at crowd at Caracas.
- October 2 - A member of the security police is killed by rifle fire outside his home in Caracas.
- October 2 - Terrorists fire shots and foment street disturbances in a Caracas working class district.
- October 2 - Man is wounded by gunblast from passing automobile in town near Caracas.
- October 2 - Terrorists plunge city of Barcelona into darkness by damaging generators in local electric plant.
- October 2 - Terrorists attempt to rob lottery office in Valencia.
- October 2 - Communist thugs try to break up political rally in Ciudad Bolívar.
- October 2 - Terrorists break into home of Army officer in Caracas.
- October 2 - Two bombs are discovered on railroad bridge north of Barcelona.
- October 3 - Terrorists set fire to funeral hearse in Mérida State.
- October 3 - Terrorists break into home of naval officer in Caracas.
- October 3 - Bomb explodes in radio station of town near Barquisimeto.
- October 4 - Terrorists set fires in Embassies of the Dominican Republic and Poland at Caracas.
- October 4 - Bomb explodes in political party office in Caracas.
- October 4 - Bomb explodes in Shell Oil Company guesthouse near Maracaibo.
- October 4 - Clandestine radio in San Cristóbal urges people to revolt against government.
- October 5 - Police frustrate attack by five terrorists on offices of English language Daily Journal in Caracas; one man is killed in gunfight.
- October 5 - Police wound man trying to install bomb underneath bridge in Caracas.

Table I (continued)

- October 6 - Political party office in Valencia is attacked by gunfire and Molotov cocktails.
- October 6 - Bomb explodes in automobile parked at Mobil Oil service station in Caracas.
- October 7 - Bomb explodes in government office in Mérida State.
- October 7 - Two bombs explode on bridge in Barcelona; one man is seriously wounded.
- October 7 - Bomb is found in political party office in La Guaira.
- October 7 - Dynamite explosion damages gas pipeline and high tension electricity lines near Caracas.
- October 8 - The government announces discovery of a secret Castro-Communist plan for multiple terrorist actions all over Caracas on October 7; the plan is forestalled by preventive arrest of hundreds of suspected terrorists.
- October 8 - A terrorist unit of 18 men seizes roof of maternity hospital in Caracas; uses it as a vantage point for sniper attack on adjacent military motor pool. One person is killed; eight wounded.
- October 8 - Bomb explodes in bar of Hotel Tamanaco in Caracas; four persons are wounded.
- October 9 - Police frustrate terrorist attack on Embassy of Panama at Caracas.
- October 10 - Bomb explodes in political party office in town near Maracaibo.
- October 10 - Terrorists attempt attack on office of newspaper Ultimas Noticias in Caracas.
- October 11 - Explosion of an oil pipeline causes great alarm in city of Barcelona.
- October 14 - Two terrorists fire at passing police radiopatrol car in Caracas and are captured.
- October 17 - Police frustrate terrorist attempt to rob branch of the First National City Bank in Caracas.

Table I (continued)

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|------------|---|
| October 23 | - Heavy damages are caused by fire in electric plant of Mene Grande Company (Gulf Oil) at El Tigre.   |
| October 28 | - Terrorists knock out one-sixth of Venezuela's oil producing capacity by bomb explosions at three electric power substations in Maracaibo oilfields. |
| October 30 | - Police remove three dynamite sticks from offices of Procter and Gamble in Coro, capital of Falcón State.  |

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The effect produced in Venezuela by the urban insurgency violence, and the spirit which guided the government's response, are described by President Betancourt: "After a dangerous period in which stunned surprise produced a kind of public paralysis, the country was roused to a test of its nerve in the form of fires, dynamite blasts, and cowardly murders. I appealed to the people by television and radio, insisting that the fight against organized crime was not only the duty of the government but of the whole nation. I said many times that democracy is not a lax, weak, and foolish mechanism, incapable of defending itself against those who would destroy it. I recalled that Mussolini had been able to establish Fascism in Italy because of the inability of the parliamentary regime to deal with the Blackshirts before it was too late. I recommended the reading of Shirer's Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, which tells how the Weimar Republic fell before Hitler's Nazi gangs because of its lack of decisiveness in facing and shackling them when that was still possible. The bookstores sold every copy in stock."<sup>1</sup>

President Betancourt's vigorous messages to the Venezuelan people undoubtedly did much to maintain public confidence in his government's determination and ability to withstand the terrorist assault. The FALN also found itself the object of increasing public resentment the longer the campaign

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1. Rómulo Betancourt, "The Venezuelan Miracle," The Reporter, 13 August 1964, p. 39.

of violence continued and because of wanton terrorist actions such as random burning of automobiles and buses, explosions of bombs in public places, unprovoked assassinations of policemen, and the many assaults on private residences and Venezuelan business properties in order to obtain money, arms, and miscellaneous supplies.

The fear that resentment, not terror, would be the dominant public reaction to the urban violence was probably the factor which induced the FALN in February 1963 to take the singular step of publishing a Code of Honor which it promised to observe thereafter. It pledged to refrain from attacks on public utilities and on small and medium-size Venezuelan business and industrial properties, including Venezuelan-owned outlet stores for U. S. companies. It promised to avoid attacks on large business and industrial concerns "that are not accomplices of government criminals." Military and municipal police personnel would not be attacked except when actually engaged in operations against the FALN.<sup>1</sup>

The Code of Honor, however, proved to be only a FALN propaganda ruse. After its publication, as before, police and National Guardsmen continued to be targets for assassination attempts.<sup>2</sup> Small and medium-size businesses, as well as private residences, remained favorite targets of FALN attack as is evidenced by a partial list of terrorist attacks in Caracas during the month following publication of the Code of Honor: robbery of a drugstore, robbery of rifles from the home of the Venezuelan national skeet champion, robbery of two taxi-cab drivers, robbery of a bank, robbery of a perfume shop, robbery of a gasoline service station, robbery of a hardware store, robbery of a radio transmitter, jewelry, and money from a private residence.<sup>3</sup>

1. The FALN Code of Honor is dated 20 February 1963 and apparently was given wide distribution in clandestine insurgent propaganda leaflets.
2. As of September 1963, a total of 49 policemen had been killed by terrorists in Caracas alone since the initiation of the Castro-Communist insurgency in October 1960. The sneak nature of these assassinations is indicated by the fact that only three terrorists had been brought to criminal prosecution. El Universal, 20 September 1963.
3. El Universal, 24 February-20 March 1963.

The Code of Honor pledge to avoid attacks on small and medium-size outlet stores for U. S. companies was also broken. Arson and robbery assaults continued on Venezuelan-owned retail shops selling products from companies like Goodyear, Firestone, General Tire, DuPont, and Adams Shirts. There were cases, like the large April 1963 fire at the Dougherty Cordage Mill in Caracas, where the FALN wrecked an entirely Venezuelan business property with no U. S. association other than its name.<sup>1</sup> In the interior of the country, where U. S. business properties were not always within reach, the FALN had no scruple about burning or wrecking targets like a rural aqueduct, a distillery, and a sesame oil pressing plant.<sup>2</sup>

The FALN also did nothing to hinder or repudiate the upsurge in urban crime and juvenile delinquency which developed in conjunction with the terrorist attacks.<sup>3</sup> As the months wore on, therefore, and the incidence of crime mounted with the incidence of terrorism, it became increasingly difficult for the public to discern whether many attacks were the work of the FALN or of common thieves and delinquents, unless the FALN chose to identify itself. Another circumstance which helped to blur the distinction between terrorist and criminal was the drain-off of many FALN operatives in police arrests and their replacement by persons whom the government described as being of "low social category."<sup>4</sup> Some of these were criminals or near-criminals who were not averse to stealing furs and jewelry in addition to the money and arms more usually sought by terrorists. Others were dope addicts; and it was charged that the FALN deliberately encouraged or allowed

1. El Universal, 27 April 1963.
2. El Universal, 14 March, 27 August, 6 December 1963.
3. The companion increase in terrorism, crime, and juvenile delinquency is evident in contemporary newspaper reports; it was also noted in a report submitted by Venezuelan insurance companies to the government. El Universal, 13 July 1963.
4. El Nacional, 12 September 1963.

some of its recruits to form the habit so as to assure itself a supply of men who would undertake terrorist actions in return for drug supplies.<sup>1</sup>

The net result was that the longer the FALN campaign of terror continued in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities, from Autumn 1962 into Autumn 1963, the less it bore any resemblance to a disciplined insurgent effort and the more it dissolved into a welter of terrorist-criminal-dope addict violence that threatened society as much, if not more, than the government. From July 1963 onwards, police in Caracas began to note a 60 per cent increase in the number of persons who were willing to provide information on FALN terrorists lurking in their neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> In September 1963 an angry crowd in Barcelona chased four oil pipeline saboteurs into a swamp and penned them there until the police arrived.<sup>3</sup> The general mood throughout the country was probably summed up by a veteran commentator who declared that the people had lost patience not with the government but with those responsible for the continual and mounting violence.<sup>4</sup>

But even as public opinion hardened against the FALN, the number of terrorist attacks in Caracas and other cities began to soar during

1. "There is tragic proof of the growing traffic in drugs in our milieu and of their use by the juvenile sector. It has been proved that the extremist groups have systematically used the juvenile sector to carry out all kinds of crime so as to create a climate of violence and insecurity. One of the methods most commonly employed for this detestable political purpose is to draw in youthful recruits — the great majority of them under 18 years old — by encouraging them in the drug habit. This has been amply proven by police experience, which has shown that many of the crimes committed by youths are carried out under the influence of massive doses of drugs." Report of Accion Venezolana Independiente on the Crisis of Venezuelan Youth, submitted to the President of the Republic. El Universal, 28 August 1964. See also the reference to dope addiction among FALN terrorists in Felix Martinez Suarez, Tres años de Castro comunismo, Caracas, 1964, p. 71.
2. Statement of the Venezuelan Minister of Interior Relations, reported in New York Times, 3 November 1963.
3. El Nacional, 23 and 24 September 1963.
4. Gustavo Jaén in El Universal, 18 September 1963.

Summer 1963.<sup>1</sup> By September, the insurgents had some reason to think that their violence was paying off. The Venezuelan military were said to be threatening President Betancourt with a coup d'etat unless he undertook sterner measures of repression, including the suspension of many civil liberties.<sup>2</sup> The left-wing democratic opposition parties, on the other hand, were urging the government to make overtures of peace to the insurgents and threatening to withdraw their candidates from the December 1963 elections if the President acceded to the military demands.<sup>3</sup> Betancourt was represented as vacillating between both extremes, unwilling to offend the military but unwilling to take any action that might lead the opposition parties to boycott the elections and thereby weaken chances for stable democratic government in the future.

Throughout September 1963 the FALN carried out a series of goading attacks on military personnel and military residences in Caracas, in an obvious attempt to prod the armed forces into a coup d'etat. On the morning of 29 September, in still another effort to provoke the military, a group of FALN terrorists boarded a crowded excursion train near Caracas and shot down four National Guardsmen in the midst of passenger cars packed with hysterical women and children.

No other single act of FALN terrorism produced so strong an outcry of public indignation as the attack on the excursion train. The dead National Guardsmen were given a funeral with full honors in the Caracas

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1. See the fold-out chart indicating monthly volume of urban terrorist incidents appended to Chapter 11 of this report.
  2. "The threat of an imminent military uprising hangs heavily over Venezuela. People in the streets talk of little else, and Caracas publications are expressing their concern with banner headlines. Terrorist activity has mounted steadily in recent weeks. The armed forces, angered at the government's inability to halt the attacks, is widely believed to be planning to take matters into its own hands." George Natanson in the Washington Post, 20 September 1963.
  3. Hispanic American Report, 1963, pp. 883-884; New York Times, 5 and 8 October 1963.

cathedral. The government seized the moment of opportunity and decreed strong emergency measures against the terrorists, including the arbitrary arrest of Communist and MIR Deputies in the National Congress who had propagandized for the FALN under protection of parliamentary immunity. The democratic opposition parties made token protests, but remained in the election campaign. The threat of military coup d'etat — if there really had been one — was over.

#### Second Urban Terror Campaign

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Castro-Communists had prepared against the possibility that urban terrorism would not trigger a military or civilian revolt that would force President Betancourt from office prior to the December 1963 elections. Accordingly, even before the counterproductive murder of the National Guardsmen, the Castro-Communists were making ready to escalate the terrorism into an all-out burst of urban insurgency violence which they hoped would disrupt the election campaign in its final weeks and frighten great numbers of Venezuelan citizens away from the polls on Election Day, 1 December.

The plan to wreck the elections had two parts. "Operation Caracas" called for the seizure and fortification of a large sector of Caracas by 800 insurgents armed with mortars, bazookas, recoilless rifles, automatic rifles, submachineguns, and ammunition smuggled in from Cuba. "Operation Moto" was to support the Caracas uprising in the remainder of the country by oil-field sabotage, forest fires, and attacks on communications facilities, military garrisons, and other strategic installations.<sup>1</sup>

The approach of Operations "Caracas" and "Moto" was heralded in October 1963 by a spectacular surge in the volume of urban terrorist

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1. This description of "Operation Caracas" and "Operation Moto" is from press reports of secret testimony by the Venezuelan Minister of Defense at a meeting of the OAS. New York Times, 4 January 1964; also, Washington Post, 5 January 1964.

actions despite the fact that the streets of Caracas and other cities were bristling with military and police patrols in anticipation of a large-scale FALN attempt at pre-election violence. But on 1 November the insurgent scheme for "Operation Caracas" was dealt a mortal blow. A fisherman in Falcón State discovered the cache of Cuban arms needed to support the operation on an isolated ocean beach. A few days later, police in Caracas seized the detailed plans for "Operation Caracas" and thereby averted the chance that it might be attempted without the Cuban arms.<sup>1</sup>

The Castro-Communists nonetheless decided to press the attack on the elections with every means remaining at their disposal. On 19 November the FALN issued a demand for a revolutionary general strike; in Caracas it tried to enforce the summons with sniper fire and street violence. Many Caracas shops closed down on 19 November at the FALN's order, nine persons were killed, and more than 70 wounded by gunfire. The violence at Caracas continued into 20 November, but with rapidly diminishing effectiveness as police and military cleaned out sniper nests and rounded up 750 known or suspected terrorists. By 21 November, the city was virtually back to normal.<sup>2</sup>

The failure of the general strike left the FALN with one last weapon in its terror arsenal. Warnings were issued in Caracas and other cities that anyone, including women and children, found out of doors on Election Day, 1 December, would be liable to FALN execution.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Elections of December 1963

In the early morning hours of 1 December 1963, long lines of voters formed outside polling places in Caracas. The scene was duplicated in cities,

1. Report of the OAS Committee investigating the Cuban arms cache in Venezuela, pp. 37, 53-55.
2. El Universal and El Nacional, 20, 21, and 22 November 1963.
3. Some FALN leaflets also warned that persons found out of doors on the two days preceding the election would also be liable to death.

towns, and villages in all parts of the country, under tight police and military guard and with only rare attempts at FALN violence. Some 3,078,910 voters, or 91.36 per cent of the eligible and registered electorate, went to the polls. This was a drop of less than two percentage points from the 93 per cent voter turnout in the entirely peaceful elections of December 1958.

The mass turnout of voters was especially impressive in Caracas, the city which had borne the heaviest burden of terrorist violence and was to experience sniper fire on Election Day which left one person dead and 12 wounded. Although the element of fear was present, voters stood for hours in long lines outside the polling places.

The voter participation in the December 1963 elections was a stunning rebuff to the entire Castro-Communist terrorist campaign, for it exceeded even the expectations of most Venezuelan political leaders.<sup>1</sup> In another way also, the elections were clear proof that the Venezuelan people preferred democratic procedures to Castro-Communist insurgency as a means of registering political dissent. Although Rómulo Betancourt had carried the country through the terrorist violence, his Acción Democrática Party and its presidential candidate, Raúl Leoni, garnered only 33 per cent of the total vote — a substantial drop from the 49 per cent vote given to Betancourt and Acción Democrática in 1958. Two-thirds of the Venezuelan electorate thus ranged itself against Betancourt and his party, but its very act of voting in the elections was an affirmation of allegiance to democracy rather than to Castro-Communism.

The vote for Raúl Leoni was sufficient to win him the Venezuelan presidency, since the remainder of the presidential vote was divided among five candidates who received smaller percentages of the total votes cast. Leoni succeeded Betancourt in the presidency on 11 March 1964.

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1. John D. Martz, The Venezuelan Elections of December 1, 1963, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, 1964, pp. 35-37.

Chapter 5  
THE INSURGENT SHIFT TO PROTRACTED WAR  
(1964- )

Twelve days after the December 1963 elections some of the top leaders of the Venezuelan Communist Party met secretly at Caracas and issued a statement which declared: "The course of the Venezuelan political crisis has fully confirmed the justice of the general line laid down by the Central Committee of our Party."<sup>1</sup> But the words contrasted with what one Communist later described as the "atmosphere of defeat" that enveloped the insurgents.<sup>2</sup> Bitter arguments also broke out within the Communist and MIR Parties. Some leaders argued for continuation of the armed fight in spite of the elections; others claimed that further violence would lead to further disaster for the Castro-Communist cause.

The effect of the divided counsels in the insurgent camp was seen in the uncertain course of Castro-Communist violence in Venezuela during the early months of 1964. The volume of urban and urban-based terrorist incidents plummeted from the historic highs recorded in September-December 1963 to the near vanishing point in January-June 1964.<sup>3</sup> Some of the guerrillas in the Falcon and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela surrendered to the authorities or fled the country. Others remained in the hills despite the election experience.

The insurgents attempted to cover up the confusion in their ranks by letting it be known that they were observing a "truce" until President Raúl Leoni took office in March 1964 and had an opportunity to demonstrate whether he would break with the "criminal policies" of the Betancourt Government.<sup>4</sup> But unity was

1. Quoted in La Republica, 7 April 1964, 30 September 1964.
2. Quoted in La Republica and El Nacional, 18 July 1964.
3. The monthly volume of urban terrorist incidents in Venezuela in the period January-July 1964 is indicated in the fold-out chart appended to Chapter 11 of this report.
4. A reference to the "truce" appears in a May 1964 message of the Communist Party to the Venezuelan People reproduced in the World Marxist Review Information Bulletin, 18 September 1964, p. 51.

lacking even on this tactic, for some die-hard insurgent elements refused to honor the "truce." A new guerrilla band, apparently short-lived, appeared during December 1963 in the mountains near Quiriquire in eastern Venezuela.<sup>1</sup> In early Spring 1964, government forces broke up another guerrilla band which attempted operations in the mountains near Ocumare del Tuy in Miranda State.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, although on a vastly reduced scale, urban and urban-based terrorists continued with robberies, arson, bomb explosions, and sabotage of oil pipelines and oil installations.

The decision of some insurgents — perhaps the majority — to press on with armed violence produced the first major split among the Castro-Communists since the initiation of insurgency violence in October 1960. The split was gradual, first developing in secret discussions, then making its way into public print. By late Summer 1964 some previously ardent supporters of the insurgency were issuing statements denouncing it as stupid, criminal, and adventurist.

#### The Split in the Insurgent Ranks

The split in the insurgent ranks had its origin in a dispute over the proper tactic for the Castro-Communists after the December 1963 elections. Some argued for continuation of the "armed fight." Others contended that the situation required a "mass fight" — i.e., peaceful propaganda and agitation that would convince the public that peace could be restored through an amnesty for insurgent prisoners and re-legalization of the Communist and MIR Parties.

The insurgents who favored the tactic of "armed fight" seized control of the Central Committee of the Venezuelan Communist Party and announced their position in a message of May 1964. The Communists would adhere to "the peaceful road," the message declared, only if the Leoni government unilaterally and without prior insurgent concession agreed to the following terms: general amnesty, re-legalization of the Communist and MIR Parties, removal

1. El Universal, 21 December 1963, 4 January 1964.
2. El Universal, El Nacional, La República, 2 March - 7 April 1964.

of government restrictions on civil liberties, and reinstatement of all military officers previously involved in armed revolts against the Betancourt Government. The message asserted that unless the Leoni Government accepted these terms, "the revolutionary forces of the country will have no other choice but to resort to violence."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the older Venezuelan Communist and MIR Party leaders refused to accept this harsh line. In May 1964 they publicly signified their adherence to the tactic of peaceful "mass fight" by helping to organize a National Committee for Amnesty and Liberation of Political Prisoners which held a mass meeting in Caracas attended by delegates from many parts of the country. In July 1964 the dissidents went further and announced their intention to join a National Front of Opposition (FNO) with other small left-wing political parties that were in favor of an amnesty but were opposed to further insurgency violence.

The exponents of "armed fight" reacted swiftly to the challenge presented by the FNO. In the period 10-16 July 1964, Castro-Communist gunmen assassinated four policemen: one in Barquisimeto, two in Caracas, and one in Coro, the capital of Falcón State.<sup>2</sup> By this means, the die-hard insurgents wrecked all hope of an early amnesty. They also served notice that the Communist and MIR leaders who favored "mass fight" could not speak for all the insurgents.

The MIR leaders associated with the FNO responded to the new insurgency violence with strong statements of repudiation. The political director of the MIR, Américo Chacón, declared in a press interview with the Soviet News Agency TASS: "Public opinion, that is to say the Venezuelan people, has been shaken by the murder of two municipal police agents in Caracas. We condemn such deeds. We emphatically declare that these actions are clear deviations from the kind of fight we must wage against the enemy. They are criminal. They are stupid. These

1. World Marxist Review Information Bulletin, 18 September 1964, pp. 47-53.
2. El Universal and El Nacional, 11, 13, 17, 18 July 1964. The insurgents also dynamited a bridge in Miranda State on 14 July.

methods have nothing in common with the revolutionary organizations. At this moment in history, the road of the popular revolution is that of the fight for amnesty, for the redemption of prisoners and of democratic freedoms."<sup>1</sup>

The case against the insurgency violence of July 1964 was expressed in even more fundamental terms by Domingo Alberto Rangel, the imprisoned secretary-general of the MIR, a former Deputy to the National Congress, and until late 1963 one of the most outspoken propagandists for the Castro-Communist insurgency under protection of his parliamentary immunity. In a document released for publication from his prison cell, Rangel declared: "The real conditions for an armed fight do not exist in Venezuela at the present moment . . . . Some errors have been committed in the conduct of the revolutionary movement which must be cleared up if the fight for liberation is to succeed. We declare that, in actuality, the popular movement must direct the greater part of its efforts into the mass fight. The accent must be placed there . . . . We cannot consent at this time to Leftist deviations and adventurism."<sup>2</sup>

Rangel and Chacón spoke only for one faction in the MIR; other members of the party, grouped around the imprisoned MIR leader Simón Sáez Mérida, supported the continuation of revolutionary violence. The result was a formal split in the once solid base of MIR support for the Castro-Communist insurgency. One wing of the party, associated with Rangel and Chacón, issued a manifesto declaring that the MIR would limit itself henceforth to peaceful "mass fight" and would work "for the pacification of the country, for an end to the violence, and for respect for the Law and the Constitution."<sup>3</sup> Another wing of the party, associated with Sáez Mérida, made clear its determination to press a violent attack on the Leoni Government. In a clandestine communique of September 1964, the Sáez Mérida wing of the MIR asserted: "In Venezuela the only way by which

1. El Nacional, 16 July 1964. In the account of this interview carried in Pravda, Chacón was also quoted as saying that the MIR condemned "the dogmatism of the Chinese Communist Party leaders and their attempts to obstruct the peace policy of the Soviet Union." Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 12 August 1964, p. 32.

2. El Nacional, 17 July 1964.

3. La Esfera, 10 November 1964; also La República, 5 December 1964.

the masses can come to power and consolidate the democratic and nationalist revolution is by the road of armed fight. This, and no other, is the real situation."<sup>1</sup>

The Venezuelan Communist Party did not suffer the same internal split as the MIR, despite the known opposition of some of its leaders to renewal of the insurgency violence. The probable reasons why the split was averted were cited by a Venezuelan commentator: "The truth is that those within the Communist Party who do not approve of the strategy of insurrection are not manly and bold enough to declare their position publicly, either for reason of solidarity with their comrades or else to avoid the one thing which that organization most fears: division. Meanwhile, the extremist groups . . . impose their will; and it seems that the Party may be defined as an ally entirely at the service of those who pursue their objectives by means of war."<sup>2</sup>

In sum, whether internal dissensions were muted as in the case of the Communists or broke into the open as in the case of the MIR, the Castro-Communists were by no means agreed in 1964 as to the wisdom of more insurgency violence in Venezuela. In view of this circumstance, and also in view of the massive rebuff to the Castro-Communists administered by the Venezuelan people in the elections of December 1963, it is of interest to inquire why those who still favor insurgency believe that there is still a prospect for ultimate victory.

#### New Strategy of Protracted War

The answer appears to lie in the new insurgency strategy adopted by the Castro-Communists during the early months of 1964. For the first time, the insurgents abandoned the hopes of "rapid victory" which guided their efforts

1. Quoted in La República, 26 September 1964.
2. Juan Liscano in El Nacional, 5 December 1964.

in 1960-1963 and turned instead to a strategy of protracted rural guerrilla warfare. Adoption of this long-range strategy has encouraged the insurgents to make light of the December 1963 elections and of the dissensions in the Communist and MIR parties. They believe that the political situation in Venezuela will change drastically, and that the divisions within the insurgent camp will melt away, when the country has felt the "warmth" of future guerrilla victories.

The insurgents' adoption of protracted war was noted in a private letter written in June 1964 by one of the Venezuelan Communist leaders to an imprisoned member of the Party and released for publication by the Venezuelan Ministry of Interior Relations.<sup>1</sup> The letter is of interest also because of its references to the "very serious errors" committed by the Castro-Communists in their earlier campaigns of insurgency violence.

\* \* \* \* \*

20 June 1964

Dear Brother,

You probably have already learned of my visit to Caracas. I will tell you about some of the problems so that you will have a better perspective of the armed movement and perhaps of the revolutionary movement in all its various aspects.

As a result of the elections of 1 December, the results of which you already know, we began an intensive discussion. In an unemotional and objective manner, we established that the movement for emancipation of Venezuela was passing through a crisis of the following order:

a. Political crisis (political alignments). The revolutionary parties had laid out a general line for the armed fight which gave it a protracted character. But, in practice, the tactics employed were

1. El Nacional and La República, 19 July 1964.

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divorced from the strategy. This made us fall into very serious errors (attempts at coups and the mistaken handling of the election problem) which placed the guerrillas on the secondary level.<sup>1</sup>

b. Organizational crisis. The political organizations for the masses, the students, and also those for the armed groups, were not structured in accordance with the strategic objective.<sup>2</sup> This error choked off the development of the popular war. In the long run, the revolutionary parties also felt the weight of this error in their organizations.

c. Ideological crisis. This became the most notorious crisis of them all.

d. Military crisis. The previously mentioned errors led to the stagnation of the army of liberation. It breathed an air of defeat. Allies of the emancipated revolutionary camp (like Domingo Alberto, Cheito, Miquilena, etc.) went over to the opposition camp.<sup>3</sup>

I will not give you an analysis of the political party situation and of the crisis within the enemy camp since I am certain that you have received this information through other sources. Instead, I will summarize for you the principal resolutions agreed upon by the revolutionary parties: the

1. As noted in Chapter 4, the Castro-Communists in Venezuela adopted the title of "protracted war" for their insurgency in late 1962 but concentrated on urban insurgency in their efforts of late 1962 and 1963 to drive President Betancourt from office and/or disrupt the December 1963 elections. This is an explanation for the statement that "in practice, the tactics employed were divorced from the strategy."
2. "Strategic objective" — i.e., protracted rural guerrilla war.
3. Domingo Alberto Rangel, as noted earlier in this chapter, is one of the MIR leaders who renounced his support of the insurgency fight in 1964 and became an advocate of peaceful "mass fight." Cheito may be Américo Chacón, another MIR leader who followed the same course as Rangel. Miquilena is Luis Miquilena, a Deputy to the National Congress, a former member of the Communist Party, and still a Communist fellow-traveler.

T Communist Party of Venezuela in the last Plenum of the Central  
R Committee [April 1964] and the MIR at the reunion of its political  
command.

- A 1. Ratification of the general line of the armed fight.  
N 2. Rectification of the tactical line.<sup>1</sup>  
S 3. Regarding organization, to create a new politico-  
L military structure for the armed movement.  
T 4. Gradual transfer of the politico-military direction  
I [of the armed fight] to the rural sector.<sup>2</sup>

A As you may see, brother, this is the first serious step towards  
T development of the fight for national liberation. However, agree-  
I ments by themselves cannot do everything. It is necessary to carry  
O them into practice. Many people still hesitate. There is a certain  
N indecision in some sectors, and this is understandable. These  
groups will come around when the warmth of our victories gives  
them a more certain hope of liberation.

O From these mountains of freedom, we salute you, comrade.  
N Embraces.

LEON

\* \* \* \* \*

Another description of the new insurgent strategy of protracted war  
is contained in an article published by a member of the Venezuelan Communist

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1. "Rectification of the tactical line" — i.e., primary emphasis on protracted rural guerrilla warfare.
  2. This passage is of interest in that top direction of the Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela has always been exercised from Caracas rather than from a rural guerrilla base. It is not known whether the insurgents have taken any concrete steps to transfer their top politico-military command to one of the rural guerrilla zones.

Party in the World Marxist Review.<sup>1</sup> The author reports that in April 1964 the Party's Central Committee met to review the insurgency situation and reaffirmed the principle that "armed struggle" was the only proper course of revolutionary action, although this did not rule out the need for peaceful organization of the popular masses and for development of alliances with political groups other than the Castro-Communists. The author contributes the following information as to the manner in which the Central Committee decided to renew the insurgency effort:

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Having confirmed this line [i.e., "armed struggle"], the meeting clarified some of its aspects. In the first place it noted we must be prepared spiritually and physically for a long struggle, and must educate all our fighters in this spirit. This will help us to remove the "desperation" and impatience which in the past led to mistakes. The meeting discussed these questions in an atmosphere of sharp criticism and self-criticism, and we are convinced that its decisions will be of great value in helping the Communists and all other revolutionaries to avoid blunders in the future. . . .

The tactics of struggle were the subject of a lively discussion at the meeting. . . . In the opinion of the CC meeting, the main form will be that of the classical "guerrilla" or partisan warfare in the rural localities, with all its attributes. The enemy is particularly vulnerable in the countryside, here control is less effective, and hence it is here that irregulars can operate with maximum chance of success and with the least losses. The maximum effort will have to be devoted to developing the movement in the mountain areas.

1. Carlos Lopez, "The Communist Party of Venezuela and the Present Situation," World Marxist Review, October 1964, pp. 20-27. The author is described by the editors of the Review as "a leading Venezuelan Communist."

At the same time, of course, we must not neglect the armed struggle in the towns where, as the experience of the revolutionary struggle in our country has shown, the opportunities are good. Up till now the activity of the so-called urban tactical units in the main cities has imparted a specific character to the revolutionary armed action in Venezuela, distinguishing it from the liberation struggle in other countries. Still, it is clear that this will not be the principal form of struggle.

\*.\*.\*.\*.\*

To implement the new strategy of protracted war, with its primary emphasis on rural guerrilla warfare, secondary emphasis on urban insurgency, the Castro-Communists undertook the following steps. Some were already in operation before the April 1964 meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee.

1. Secret training courses for additional guerrilla and urban terrorist recruits were instituted at the Central University of Caracas in March 1964 and probably in other cities.<sup>1</sup> A field training site for guerrilla recruits from Caracas, and probably also from other cities in central and eastern Venezuela, was established in the mountainous area of "El Bachiller" in Miranda State.<sup>2</sup>

2. The insurgents solicited and received supplies of money and arms from Cuba to assist in the preparations for the new campaign of rural guerrilla war. In a press interview of October 1964, President Leoni reported that Venezuelan authorities estimated that Cuba had sent in as much as \$1,000,000 during 1964 to aid the insurgents and "numerous arms."<sup>3</sup> Cuban support for renewal of the insurgent fight in Venezuela was also demonstrated in November 1964

1. El Nacional, 25 May 1964.
2. El Universal, 10 and 11 July 1964.
3. El Universal, 17 October 1964

by the opening of an office in Havana for the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), the name adopted by the Venezuelan insurgents for their guerrillas and urban terrorists. The inauguration ceremonies were attended by high Cuban officials and by the Ambassadors to Cuba from the U.S.S.R., Communist China, North Vietnam, and Indonesia.<sup>1</sup>

3. The insurgents set in motion new fund-raising efforts in Venezuela. Among the methods employed were sale of bonds to Communist and MIR Party members and fellow-travelers, "expropriations" (i.e., robberies of banks and business establishments), and "taxes" imposed on business establishments under threat of insurgent violence in case of failure to pay.<sup>2</sup>

#### Rural Guerrilla Warfare

The fruit of the Castro-Communist preparations for a renewed insurgency fight became apparent in July 1964. Early in the month government forces discovered the existence of the secret guerrilla training camp in the "El Bachiller" mountains of Miranda State. While operations went forward to clear guerrillas from this sector, increased activity suddenly developed in the long-established Castro-Communist guerrilla zones in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela. In Falcón, after months of inactivity, the guerrillas carried out four ambushes of police and military patrols in the month of July alone. In the same month government concern over growing guerrilla strength in El Charal was evidenced by the despatch of troops to the area and by the arrests of scores of local townspeople and peasants suspected of supplying the guerrillas with food, clothing, and medicines.

To understand why it was possible for the Castro-Communist guerrillas to come again into action, even though captured insurgent documents gave the authorities advance warning that a new guerrilla campaign was in prospect, it will be necessary to look briefly at the background to the guerrilla revival of Summer 1964.

1. La Esfera, 16 November 1964.
2. Daily Journal (Caracas), 24 June 1964.

In the first campaign of Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela (October 1960-June 1962), attempts were made in the early months of 1962 to establish guerrilla bands in eight widely separated mountain areas of the country: Turimquire, Miranda State, Vigirima, Yaracuy, Falcón, El Charal, Agua Viva, and La Azulita.<sup>1</sup> Of these, only the bands in Falcón and El Charal survived the first government counterattacks, and only at the price of heavy losses in men and arms.

During the second Castro-Communist insurgent campaign (Summer 1962-November 1963), the main insurgent effort in Venezuela was centered on urban and urban-based violence. The surviving guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal were reinforced with men and arms, and encouraged into minor flurries of activity, but no attempt was made to establish permanent guerrilla bases in any other part of the country.

The Venezuelan Army and other government security forces undertook several operations in 1962-1964 for the purpose of eliminating the guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Army troops were employed in encirclement and "cleaning" operations in early 1963, Venezuelan Air Force planes bombed the guerrilla base areas in Falcón. Although these operations produced scores of insurgent prisoners and casualties, no one attack was pressed long enough to give the authorities complete assurance that all the guerrillas had been exterminated. Instead, the military withdrew when, in the language of official spokesmen, it was considered that the guerrillas were reduced to the status of "very small groups lacking any manner of popular support." As a result, hard-core guerrilla bands in both Falcón and El Charal managed to survive the Army attacks.

In the early months of 1964, a number of guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal surrendered voluntarily or fled the country. In Falcón almost no guerrilla activity was reported in the period January-June 1964. Only scattered guerrilla activity occurred in El Charal after the conclusion of an Army anti-guerrilla operation in February 1964. These developments encouraged government authorities to believe, as the Minister of Interior Relations remarked in

1. The locations of these and other guerrilla zones referred to in the ensuing discussion are indicated in the fold-out map appended to Chapter 11 of this report.

June 1964, that "total disbandment" of the Castro-Communist guerrilla effort was in prospect.<sup>1</sup> In apparent expectation of this outcome, security precautions in both Falcón and El Charal were allowed to relax.<sup>2</sup>

The Venezuelan authorities may thus have been caught off-guard by the sudden flare-up of Castro-Communist guerrilla activity in July 1964. Only a week after the Minister of Interior Relations made his reference to "total disbandment," government forces discovered the secret guerrilla training camp in the "El Bachiller" mountains of Miranda State. The relaxed security precautions in Falcón and El Charal apparently enabled the insurgents during Spring 1964 to send in guerrilla recruits, arms, supplies, and money without serious hindrance.

The course of the revived Castro-Communist guerrilla effort from July 1964 to 31 December 1964, the cut-off date of information for this report, is indicated by the following capsule description of main events:

1. "El Bachiller." On 1 July 1964 government forces learned of a Castro-Communist guerrilla training camp, occupied by a force of perhaps 25 to 50 insurgents, in the "El Bachiller" mountains of Miranda State.<sup>3</sup> The camp was situated at an altitude of approximately 2,500 feet in a densely vegetated subtropical region virtually devoid of resident population. The latter circumstance enabled the Army to conduct the anti-guerrilla campaign as a straight military operation. After a fix was obtained on the camp site by ground and helicopter reconnaissance, it was subjected to aerial and artillery bombardment. Troops then moved in to take the camp without resistance, while the guerrillas dispersed into nearby mountains and sought refuge in towns and villages of eastern Venezuela. The "El Bachiller" anti-guerrilla operation was concluded in early August. Six guerrillas were killed; at least 15 were captured.<sup>4</sup>

1. La Esfera, 24 June 1964.
2. References indicating a relaxation of security precautions in Falcón and El Charal in the Spring and early Summer 1964 appear in El Universal, 21 August 1964; El Nacional, 13 and 18 November 1964.
3. La Republica, 3 July 1964; El Universal, 5 July 1964. Other newspaper reports claimed between 150 and 200 insurgents in "El Bachiller"; Time Magazine (24 July 1964) reported an estimated 100 to 300 guerrillas.
4. El Universal and El Nacional, 2 July-4 August 1964; also El Universal, 20 November 1964.

2. Falcón. In the period July-September 1964, a force of perhaps 150 Castro-Communist guerrillas in the Falcón mountains of western Venezuela carried out a few ambushes of government patrols and attacked several mountain villages. Since October 1964 the guerrillas have been on the defensive. Army and other security forces have arrested local peasants and villagers suspected of aiding the insurgents, used aerial bombardment on several occasions against the guerrilla base areas, and thrown a cordon around the guerrilla zones for the purpose of starving the insurgents out. As of late November 1964, it was reported that 30 guerrillas had been killed and 60 captured.<sup>1</sup> Government spokesmen have promised that the Army operations in Falcón will continue for as long a time as may be necessary to eliminate any further guerrilla activity in the area.<sup>2</sup> No significant Army losses in encounters with the guerrillas have been reported.<sup>3</sup>

3. El Charal. Army and other security forces have been continuously in operation against a force of perhaps 110 Castro-Communist guerrillas in the El Charal mountains of western Venezuela since early Summer 1964. Aerial bombardment has been used against some guerrilla base areas. Natural conditions in El Charal, however, make it possible for the guerrillas in this region to range over a much wider area than in Falcón. As a result, despite the Army pressure, the guerrillas in El Charal occasionally penetrate past military outposts and attack small towns and villages. According to press reports, at least 17 guerrillas have been killed and 4 captured.<sup>4</sup> No significant Army losses have been reported.

1. These figures were said to come from "official sources" in Coro, the capital of Falcon State. El Universal, 26 November 1964.
2. El Nacional, 19 and 29 November 1964.
3. The Venezuelan Minister of Defense asserted in late November 1964 that only 3 military personnel had been killed and 2 wounded slightly in all the encounters of Summer-Autumn 1964 with the guerrillas of Falcón and El Charal. El Nacional, 21 November 1964.
4. El Universal, 21 November 1964.

4. Quiriquire. In December 1963-January 1964 a Castro-Communist guerrilla band went briefly into action in the mountains north of Quiriquire in eastern Venezuela. Activity in this area thereafter subsided until 1 December 1964 when a guerrilla force reported to total 60 men attacked a town of 6,000 population northwest of Quiriquire and carried off food and other supplies.<sup>1</sup> It is not known whether this guerrilla front remained in existence throughout 1964 or whether, as seems more likely, a new band was sent into the area sometime during Autumn 1964.<sup>2</sup>

5. Other. Brief flurries of Castro-Communist guerrilla activity have been reported since Summer 1964 at various places in Miranda State, in Yaracuy State, and in the plains region to the south and southeast of Barinas.

In sum, although the Castro-Communist insurgent command may decide to invest more heavily in guerrilla operations in other areas of the country, the mountain regions of Falcón and El Charal were the main centers of guerrilla activity in Venezuela as of late 1964. The prestige of the Venezuelan Army is now so heavily committed to elimination of the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas that any future military withdrawal from the two regions, without securing the capture of at least the principal guerrilla leaders, might well have a serious effect on military morale and, conceivably, on the stability of the Leoni Government. By the same token, heavy guerrilla defeats in Falcón and El Charal might well prove a fatal blow to the new Castro-Communist insurgent strategy of protracted war.

#### Urban Insurgency

The revived Castro-Communist guerrilla effort in Venezuela has been accompanied since summer 1964 by an increase in urban and urban-based terrorism. In October 1964, for example, some 29 terrorist incidents were recorded in Caracas alone — the highest monthly total in the city since December 1963. One notable terrorist exploit in October 1964 was the kidnapping of Lt. Col. Michael Smolen, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Air Force Mission in Caracas.

1. El Nacional, 2,3, and 4 December 1964.
2. Rumors were current in Caracas as of early November 1964 that the Castro-Communists would soon open a guerrilla "second front" in eastern Venezuela. El Nacional, 14 November 1964.

Most urban terrorist incidents in Venezuela since mid-1964 have involved robberies of stores and residences for money and arms, explosion of bombs and pamphlet bombs, and occasional gunblasts from passing automobiles at policemen and government buildings. The lack of popular support for these actions is suggested by the fact that on two occasions in 1964 — in May-June and again in late November-December — the Castro-Communists were unable to capitalize upon student strikes, street demonstrations, and minor street disorders which broke out at Caracas and other cities for reasons unconnected with the revived insurgency effort. In previous years, similar manifestations of student unrest would have been seized upon by the insurgents as an opportunity for major riot and violence.

Urban-based terrorists have also contributed in a minor degree to the new Castro-Communist insurgency campaign in Venezuela by traveling out in automobiles to attack rural highway bridges, public utilities, villages, and oil pipelines and tank stations. In one case in the El Charal guerrilla region, a group of urban-based terrorists used trucks and automobiles to attack a village located in the rear of Army forces pursuing the guerrillas in the mountains.<sup>1</sup>

Study of the urban and urban-based terrorist incidents in Venezuela since mid-1964 does not indicate that the Castro-Communists have any present intention of pushing the volume of urban insurgency incidents to the historic highs recorded during 1963. On the contrary, it seems more likely that in accordance with the new strategy of protracted war, urban insurgency is currently in use as a secondary tactic, with the main Castro-Communist hopes now fastened upon successful prosecution and progressive growth of rural guerrilla warfare.

1. El Universal and La República, 21 November 1964.

**PART II - INSURGENT ORGANIZATION, WEAPONS, AND SUPPLY SYSTEMS**

## Chapter 6

### THE ARMED FORCES OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (FALN)

Previous chapters of this report have described the broad patterns of Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela since its initiation in October 1960. This discussion may now serve as background for analyses of specific operational features of the insurgency and the Venezuelan Government's counter-insurgency response. The chapters immediately following are devoted to an analysis of insurgent organization, weaponry, and supply systems.

\* \* \* \* \*

The organization of the Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela during the initial campaign for "rapid victory" (October 1960-June 1962) was extremely faulty. No central military command was established to direct and coordinate the various insurgent actions; the result, in the words of one Venezuelan Communist Party critic, was an "intolerable dispersion" of the insurgent effort.<sup>1</sup> No attempt was even made to enroll the insurgent forces into one military organization until early 1962 when a clandestine National Army of Liberation (Ejercito Nacional de Liberación—ENL) was formed.<sup>2</sup>

To secure better control and direction of the insurgent effort, the Castro-Communists in late 1962 dissolved the ENL and enrolled all their forces in a new clandestine army known as the Armed Forces of National Liberation

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1. The views of this critic are quoted at length in Chapter 3 of this report.
  2. The ENL issued its second clandestine "communique" in March or April 1962. On this basis, it is assumed that the ENL did not come into existence until early 1962.

(Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional --FALN).<sup>1</sup> As the FALN has been in continuous existence since late 1962, and apparently has established a high degree of control over all insurgency actions, a study of its structure will provide a useful insight into the organizational aspect of recent Castro-Communist insurgency developments in Venezuela.

### Constituent Forces

A characteristic feature of Communist-dominated "armies of national liberation" is the effort to draw in as many allies as possible into the fight against incumbent governments. The FALN is no exception. It has found room in its ranks for all sorts of anti-government elements, including former supporters of the ousted Venezuelan dictator Pérez Jiménez (1950-1958), and is particularly anxious to attract elements of the regular Venezuelan military.

Like many clandestine armies, however, the FALN is more imposing on paper than reality. Ostensibly it is comprised of six constituent forces:

- Movement of the 4th of May (Carúpano)
- Movement of the 2nd of June (Puerto Cabello)
- Civil-Military Union
- Guerrilla Front José Leonardo Chirinos (Falcón)
- Guerrilla Front Libertador (El Charal)
- National Guerrilla Command

- 
1. The FALN's formal act of self-constitution was not signed until 20 February 1963. The authority for the statement that the FALN was actually in operation as of late 1962 is that of U. S. CIA Director John A. McCone: "We know that in late 1962 Communist guerrilla and terrorist operations in Venezuela were placed under a unified command which coordinates activities with the other militant extremist group in Venezuela, the MIR. The result has been the creation of the FALN, or Armed Forces of National Liberation." Statement in U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 64.

The 4th of May and 2nd of June Movements comprise the military officers and rebels imprisoned because of their participation in the unsuccessful revolts of Spring 1962 by the Marine garrisons at Carúpano and Puerto Cabello. Neither movement, therefore, has any real place in the day-to-day operations of the FALN.<sup>1</sup> The Civil-Military Union appears to comprise a handful of military officers who were formerly aligned with the Venezuelan dictator, Pérez Jiménez (1950-1958), and have transferred their allegiance to the Castro-Communists. Until his capture in December 1963, the Civil-Military Union was headed by Lt. Col. José Moncada Vidal, a veteran of three attempts at Rightist-oriented military insurgency in Venezuela (1958-1960).

The "basic organization" of the FALN, as it was once described by an insurgent leader, is comprised of the National Guerrilla Command and the two guerrilla fronts in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela.<sup>2</sup> The title of the National Guerrilla Command is misleading, since it controls only the FALN urban terrorists and not rural guerrillas. The urban terrorists are organized into Tactical Combat Units (UTC). The UTC's are of two kinds: some operate only or principally within urban areas; others are urban-based units which move out from the cities, usually by automobile, to attack rural targets or to operate, temporarily, as rural guerrillas.

The personnel strength of the FALN has probably varied considerably, according to the ups and downs of the Castro-Communist insurgent fortunes in Venezuela since late 1962. A U. S. correspondent writing in November 1963, at a time when the FALN was probably near peak strength, quotes an estimate of 600-1,000 FALN urban terrorists and 400 FALN rural guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal.<sup>3</sup>

1. Some of the military officers in the 4th of May and 2nd of June Movements escaped from prison in late 1963 but were soon recaptured. At the end of 1964, the Venezuelan Government began to release some of the less important participants in the two garrison revolts.
2. Statement of a FALN leader, broadcast over Radio Havana, 17 August 1963.
3. New York Times, 3 November 1963. The number of guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal has varied greatly at different times in their history. It is thought likely (judging from the scale of their operations) that there were no more than 150-200 guerrillas in Falcon and El Charal in November 1963; on the other hand, as of Summer 1964, there may easily have been as many as 250 guerrillas in the two areas.

The strength of the FALN, however, is not measured only by the number of personnel actually enrolled in its ranks. Members of student and other youth groups attached to the Venezuelan Communist Party and the Castroite Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) are organized into auxiliary FALN units which collect intelligence, carry on propaganda activities such as the scrawling of the initials FALN in public places, and engage in street violence and sabotage.<sup>1</sup> Support for the insurgents is also provided by Communist and MIR Party members who may take no active part in the insurgency, and may not even approve of it, but are bound by rules of Party discipline to render assistance when demanded.<sup>2</sup>

A Venezuelan Armed Forces memorandum of 1962 described the quality of FALN personnel in the following terms: "The human element which predominates in its effectives is young: it originates in the universities and secondary schools. . . and is accompanied by some peasants and members of various professional groups. By reason of its student character, the level of culture and of capability for assigned tasks is considerable. By reason of its Marxist-Leninist political affiliation, it is imbued with an extreme fanaticism, and this is echoed in a good fighting morale."<sup>3</sup>

Not all FALN urban effectives, however, were university or secondary school students or members of professional groups. The insurgents also recruited terrorists, particularly in Caracas, in slums, in poor working class districts, and among juvenile delinquents and dope addicts.<sup>4</sup>

1. This description of the missions of the FALN units is taken from documents of the Venezuelan Communist and MIR Youth organizations in the Central University of Caracas which describe a two-month training course (March-May 1964) for university students who will serve as FALN auxiliaries. El Nacional, 25 May 1964.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 28.
3. Quoted in La Esfera, 31 May 1964.
4. Félix Martínez Suárez, Tres años de Castro comunismo, 1964, pp. 69-71. According to this source, the insurgents employed salaried recruiting agents who circulated in cafes, stores, places of entertainment, and in slum areas. He cites the case of one recruiting agent who specialized in playing the part of a lover to young girls who were gradually drawn into complicity in terrorist ventures.

### Territorial Organization

The FALN has its supreme headquarters and General Staff headquarters in Caracas.<sup>1</sup> Its titular Commander-in-Chief, Navy Captain Manuel Ponte Rodriguez, has been in prison since June 1962 for his part in the Puerto Cabello military uprising; actual top direction of the FALN effort is probably entrusted to unknown persons specially designated by the Central Committee of the Venezuelan Communist Party and the Political Command of the MIR. Until his capture in December 1963, the FALN General Staff was headed by Army Lt. Col. José Moncada Vidal, a refugee from justice who participated in an abortive military uprising at San Cristóbal (April 1960) and escaped from prison in June 1961.<sup>2</sup>

Direction of the urban and urban-based terrorist effort is exercised by the National Guerrilla Command, which presumably has its national headquarters in Caracas. There is probably a special terrorist command in Caracas which directs operations in the capital city and nearby towns and villages.<sup>3</sup> To assist control over urban terrorist operations in other parts of Venezuela, the FALN has divided the country into a number of military districts, each with its own district command and supporting staff.

1. In Spring 1964 the Communist and MIR leadership decided to undertake a "gradual transfer" of the supreme FALN headquarters from Caracas to a rural guerrilla zone. El Nacional and La República, 19 July 1964. It is not known whether any practical steps to implement the transfer have been undertaken. The Venezuelan police have claimed discovery of two "national FALN command centers" in Caracas — one in a bookstore, the other in a private residence — but in neither case were important insurgent leaders apprehended except for a Communist Deputy to the National Congress who had to be released because of parliamentary immunity. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 381; El Universal, 8 February 1963.
2. Additional biographical details on Lt. Col. Moncada Vidal may be found in El Nacional, 6 December 1963.
3. In September 1964 police in Caracas arrested a man whom they identified as the Chief of Intelligence Services for the terrorist units operating in the city. This would indicate the existence of a special terrorist command to coordinate FALN operations in Caracas. El Universal, 19 September 1964.

The rural guerrillas in the Falcón and El Charal mountains maintain liaison with nearby FALN military district headquarters but apparently operate as independent units which receive orders from supreme FALN headquarters in Caracas.<sup>1</sup>

#### Command Control

There is considerable evidence to indicate that the FALN command structure is operative and that the Caracas headquarters, in particular, has secured a high degree of centralized control over insurgent activities in various parts of the country. Compatible systems of rank and discipline, for example, have been established for both terrorist and guerrilla units. Officer ranks are conferred only by the FALN General Staff in Caracas; individual unit commanders are empowered to appoint their own sub-commanders and NCO's.<sup>2</sup> An FALN code of discipline provides penalties both for military derelictions of duty, such as failure to execute orders, and for political offenses, such as "engaging in factional, splitting activities in the ranks of FALN or the divulging of political differences that might arise within FALN."<sup>3</sup>

Another evidence of centralized control was seen in the FALN practice of sending seasoned Caracas terrorists into interior cities and towns of the country in order to serve as cadres for local FALN units.<sup>4</sup> The case of

1. The Commanders of the guerrilla fronts in Falcón and El Charal were given the rank of FALN Lt. Col. in February 1963. The Commanders of the military districts hold the rank of FALN Major. On this basis, it is assumed that the guerrillas are not under military district command.
2. According to one source, the FALN command in Caracas employed a professor of psychology to develop "psychiatric indices" to test the mental abilities, physical reflexes, and emotional qualities of prospective chiefs of FALN terrorist cells. Felix Martinez Suárez, Tres años de Castro comunismo, p. 69.
3. V. Listov, "Venezuelan Guerrillas," International Affairs (Moscow), December 1963, p. 57.
4. Some of the terrorists sent out from Caracas were on the police wanted lists in the capital and presumably found it prudent to transfer themselves elsewhere. E.G., El Universal, 10 May 1963.

Maracaibo is illustrative. In March 1963, the Maracaibo police arrested four insurgents who admitted that they were sent from Caracas to organize local terrorist units and to obtain funds for the FALN through a series of bank and other robberies. All money realized from the robberies in Maracaibo was to be sent back to FALN headquarters in Caracas where it would be used to purchase arms and supplies for the rural guerrillas and for terrorist cells in other cities of the country.<sup>1</sup> In October 1963, another Caracas terrorist was picked up by police in Maracaibo.<sup>2</sup> In October 1964, still more FALN operatives from Caracas were seized in a police raid on a Maracaibo terrorist hideout and charged with complicity in a scheme to raise more than \$200,000 for the FALN by robberies of local banks.<sup>3</sup>

Still another means used by the top insurgent command in Caracas to control, as well as to evaluate, the performance of FALN effectives in different parts of the country has been the establishment of monthly budgets for individual units. In Spring 1963, for example, an FALN terrorist arrested in western Venezuela was found to be carrying a document from the Communist Party Politburo in Caracas which criticized the cost efficiency of terrorist units in interior cities of the country as compared to the "effectiveness" of some FALN units in Caracas. One paragraph in the document noted: "In Caracas, during the course of two months, a unit with a monthly budget of 1,235 bolívares [about U. S. \$270] obtained 10 rifles, 10 submachine guns, 2,000 bullets, and carried out an assault on a village. The same unit with a budget of 1,500 bolívares [\$330] produced such deeds in the course of two other months as the attack on the Museum of Fine Arts, the delivery of the toys, and a Rockefeller vehicle."<sup>4</sup> In August 1962 the principal FALN rural guerrilla commander

1. El Universal, 4 March 1963.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 347.
3. La República, 2 October 1964.
4. Quoted in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 427. In January 1963 FALN terrorists robbed five paintings from the Caracas Museum of Fine Arts. "Delivery of the toys" presumably refers to the later return of the paintings by the terrorists. The Rockefeller family has a number of business interests in Venezuela, including a food warehouse in Caracas from which the vehicle in question was probably stolen.

in El Charal complained that the monthly budget of 500 bolívares (\$110) established for his forces was completely inadequate.<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence of centralized control over the national insurgent effort may be found in the master operational plans occasionally prepared by the supreme FALN headquarters for the purpose of procuring synchronized outbreaks of terrorist violence in all parts of the country. In February 1963, for example, police at Caracas forestalled one such plan by seizing the distribution copies in a FALN hideout. Each of the copies bore the notation that implementation of the plan by terrorist units in the interior of Venezuela was to await a command signal from the insurgent headquarters in Caracas.<sup>2</sup> Another master plan for nationwide terrorist violence, called "Operation Moto," was put into effect in late 1963 when the FALN was engaged in a last-ditch effort to prevent or disrupt the December elections.<sup>3</sup>

Centralized control of FALN units has been assisted by the variety of communications channels through which the Caracas headquarters, with little danger of detection, can maintain contact with insurgent operatives in the interior of the country. Under the conditions of civil liberty which exist in Venezuela, citizens have the constitutional right to travel freely in all parts of the national territory. FALN couriers can thus take messages by automobile, bus, or jitney cab to any city or town of the interior in which terrorist units are located. Even in the case of the rural guerrilla zones, the government has seldom suspended the right of free transit, with the result that FALN couriers have often penetrated without serious hindrance to the vicinity of guerrilla base campsites.<sup>4</sup>

1. Letter reproduced in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 294
2. El Universal, 8 February 1963.
3. New York Times, 4 January 1964. The FALN Chief of General Staff, Lt. Col. Moncada Vidal, was said to be in personal charge of "Operation Moto." Prior to its execution, he left Caracas and visited a number of cities in western Venezuela, presumably for the purpose of checking on the preparations of local FALN terrorist units and giving detailed oral instructions. La Esfera, 9 December 1963.
4. In August 1964 a Venezuelan Army general visiting Falcon State told reporters that the guerrillas could be exterminated "in less than two hours" if the government would suspend the right of free transit into the Falcon guerrilla zone. He added, however, that the Army intended to respect the constitutional rights of citizens even though this would hinder its efforts to liquidate the guerrillas. El Universal, 21 August 1964.

Radio has been another important means of communication between the Caracas headquarters and subordinate FALN units. The necessary transmitting and receiving sets have been picked up in numerous FALN robberies of stores and private residences in Caracas and other cities.<sup>1</sup> The equipment has been used on many occasions to broadcast subversive propaganda within Venezuela and to relay code messages to FALN units.<sup>2</sup> The insurgents have doubtless also made use of the extensive national telephone and telegraph networks, although presumably with caution because of the greater dangers of government detection.

### Intelligence

Intelligence collection and evaluation appears to be another important area in which the formation of the FALN led to a considerable improvement in the organization of the Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela. The following extract from a FALN planning paper, for example, indicates how the FALN General Staff in Caracas was preparing as of late Summer 1962 to establish and provide equipment and personnel for its Intelligence Section (G-2). The paper may also be an indication that prior to the reorganization of their forces under the FALN, the insurgents did not possess an adequate Intelligence Service and that their terrorist and rural guerrilla efforts suffered accordingly.

1. According to U. S. CIA Director John A. McCone, the FALN stole so much radio equipment from Caracas stores in autumn 1962 that any aid in this respect from Cuba would have been unnecessary. U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 67.
2. Two notable FALN radio installations were discovered at Caracas in January 1963 and near Barquisimeto in August 1964. The first contained radio-telegraph equipment for communication with Cuba and a powerful transmitter for relay of messages to other parts of Venezuela. The second consisted of a 10 KW transmitter and other equipment valued in excess of U.S. \$20,000. El Universal, 9 January 1963; El Nacional, 28 August 1964.

T                  In order for the second section of our general staff to fulfill  
R                  its functions of intelligence, counterintelligence, and psychological  
N                  warfare in a practical manner, there are certain urgent necessities which we must fulfill without fail.

A                  Equipment. We must give the second section at least five ordinary cameras for photographs of bridges, public installations, the exteriors of military garrisons, buildings, people, etc., etc. Also two miniature cameras, especially for the photographing of documents. Also five telescopes, an ordinary copier, and a plans copier. Also 5 radio receivers, two pocket recorders.

L                  Personnel. To be responsible for collecting information from the military, the banks, the restaurants: these should be Party militants who can be fully trusted and who may actually be agents or office employees of the Technical-Judicial Police, Armed Forces Intelligence, the Municipal Police, and the Security Police (DIGEPOL). Also to be responsible for the telegraph operators. The personnel are to include a group of girls, a group of old women.

A                  Organization. In its most basic form, the second section must be divided into two subcommands: one for intelligence and counterintelligence, one for psychological warfare.

I                  In the subcommand for intelligence and counterintelligence, there must be someone responsible for the military and the banks and for grading the intelligence received as to importance. Naturally all the contacts will be on an individual basis.

O                  . . . It is an urgent task for this subcommand to find out, in the banks as well as through our agents in the repressive apparatus of the enemy, what security measures will be put into effect and what steps will be taken to avoid combat, and prevent our expropriations.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Expropriation" is the FALN euphemism for insurgent robberies.

This subcommand will also have jurisdiction over the telegraph offices, as well as over a contact which has already been established inside the Telecommunications Directorate of the Ministry of Communications, etc., etc.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Illustration of the extent to which the FALN General Staff actually pursued the intelligence collection effort is provided by the following examples, out of the many that could be cited. In February 1963 police discovered an elaborate card file in a FALN Caracas headquarters which contained the names of important national and state government officials and political party leaders who were marked down for possible assassination or kidnapping. The cards contained home addresses and photographs of these personages, descriptions of their daily automobile routes, and notations as to the places where they were most likely to be found at different hours of the day and night.<sup>2</sup> In March 1964, police at Caracas discovered a high-powered FALN radio receiver which apparently was being used to monitor all police frequencies.<sup>3</sup>

Police raids on FALN hideouts in the interior cities of Venezuela have also turned up evidence which indicates that the impetus given by the FALN General Staff to the intelligence collection effort is echoed in the work of individual terrorist units. In March 1963, for example, police arrested a University of Mérida student who was in possession of the detailed plans for more than 70 highway bridges slated for possible insurgent sabotage.<sup>4</sup> In

1. Quoted in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 71.
2. El Universal, 8 February 1963.
3. El Nacional, 22 March 1964.
4. El Nacional, 14 February 1963. In the same month terrorists in western Venezuela damaged or knocked out four highway bridges with dynamite explosions.

December 1963, police in Coro found a terrorist hideout which contained detailed plans of all the offices of the Falcon State Government and also a complete list of the members of the national security police (DIGEPOL) on duty in Falcon.<sup>1</sup>

Intelligence of special interest collected by terrorist units in the interior of the country is also transmitted back to supreme FALN headquarters in Caracas. In July 1963, for example, three terrorists from Caracas attacked a bank messenger in the eastern city of Barcelona and carried off Venezuelan currency worth approximately U. S. \$10,000. Police captured one of the terrorists and found that although he had never been in Barcelona prior to the robbery, he was thoroughly briefed as to the routes customarily followed by the bank messenger.<sup>2</sup>

1. El Nacional 17 December 1963.
2. El Universal, 16 July 1963.

## Chapter 7

### INSURGENT WEAPONRY

Next to proper organization and direction, the most urgent requirement of an insurgent movement is weaponry. In this latter respect, the Castro-Communists in Venezuela have been singularly well endowed, at least when compared to the stock of arms available to Fidel Castro's forces during most of their stay in the Cuban Sierra Maestra. There is information to indicate, for example, that terrorists in Caracas alone were in possession of at least 400 rifles and 100 submachine guns as of late 1963. This compares to the 150 rifles and side arms amassed by the Castro forces after their first year of guerrilla operations and to the total of 300 arms possessed by the Castro forces six months before their final victory over Batista.<sup>1</sup>

The Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela have also been supplied at various periods in their history with large stocks of incendiary and explosive materials. In the year 1963 alone, for example, the Venezuelan security police (DIGEPOL) reported capture of the following quantities of explosive materials from insurgent arsenals and workshops in various parts of the country:

Potassium chlorate	2,570 lb
Granulated carbon	1,054 lb
Black powder	1,237 lb
Ammonium sulfate	1,120 lb
Sulfur	818 lb
Solid paraffin	440 lb <sup>2</sup>

1. The figures for the number of arms possessed by Castro's guerrilla forces are derived from a speech by Fidel Castro broadcast over Radio Havana, 26 July 1963. The estimate for the number of arms possessed by Caracas terrorists as of late 1963 is extrapolated from a captured insurgent plan for civil war in the city with the aid of arms imported from Cuba. If the Cuban weapons are subtracted from the total listed in the insurgent plan as available for the attempt at civil war, it appears that the Caracas terrorists were prepared to supply at least 408 rifles and 109 submachine guns from their own resources. Report of the OAS Committee investigating the Cuban arms cache found in Cuba in November 1963, pp. 31, 53-59.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 397-398.

The skill with which the insurgents have combined these materials into home-made bombs was attested to by U. S. CIA Director John A. McCone who described the insurgent sabotage in Venezuela as "the work of experts" and as "being done with advanced types of explosives."<sup>1</sup>

In the remainder of this chapter, and within the limits of available information, an attempt is made to identify the principal sources of insurgent arms and incendiary-explosive supply, the types of arms possessed by the insurgents, and the various types of incendiary devices utilized in the performance of insurgent acts of sabotage and arson.

#### Sources of Weapon Supply

Chance developments sometimes make it relatively easy for insurgents to collect the initial stores of weapons needed to support an insurrectionary attempt. In the case of Venezuela, the Castro-Communists were fortunate in that hundreds, if not thousands, of military and police rifles, sub-machine guns, and revolvers fell into civilian hands at Caracas during the January 1958 overthrow of the dictator, Pérez Jiménez, and an abortive military revolt in September 1958. Many of these arms were never recovered by the authorities; a substantial number made their way into Castro-Communist possession.<sup>2</sup>

1. U. S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 64.
2. Statement of the Venezuelan Minister of Interior Relations, as reported in El Universal, 12 April 1962; statement of the Commandant of Federal District Police in Caracas, as reported in El Universal and El Nacional, 21 April 1963. The latter source also reported that arms fell into insurgent hands during the otherwise abortive revolt by the Puerto Cabello Marine garrison (June 1962).

Newspaper reports suggest that another important source of insurgent arms and ammunition supply, perhaps the most productive of all, has been purchase from secret agents in some of the Venezuelan police forces. In March 1963, for example, it was reported without official contradiction that the security police (DIGEPOL) had arrested a police-civilian ring in Caracas which was selling arms to the insurgents. A total of 180 rifles and 16 sub-machine guns, most of them police property, were found in a private residence.<sup>1</sup>

There are also more than a dozen reports in the Venezuelan press for the period 1962-1964 of individual policemen deserting to the insurgents and taking police arms with them. In one notable case, a police inspector absconded with some 50-60 police rifles and 12 submachine guns; in another case, some 20 police rifles, 12 revolvers, and 3 submachine guns were taken.<sup>2</sup>

Funds needed by the insurgents to finance arms purchases have probably been obtained by a variety of means. Cuba is thought to have been a large contributor during the initial period of the Venezuelan insurgency (1960-1961) and then to have slackened off its contributions after a series of bank robberies in Caracas and other cities (1962-1963) brought large sums into the insurgent treasury. Venezuelan authorities report that Cuba resumed financial assistance to the insurgents in 1964, with sums estimated to total in the neighborhood of U.S. \$1,000,000.<sup>3</sup> Funds are also obtained through clandestine sale of insurgent bonds to Communist and MIR Party members, to fellow-travelers, and to businessmen who are threatened with insurgent attacks on their properties and families for refusal to pay.<sup>4</sup>

1. El Universal, 9 March 1963. Another police-civilian ring of arms sellers was uncovered in the city of Valencia in 1964. El Universal, 30 June 1964.
2. El Nacional, 23 September 1963; El Universal, 24 September 1963; La República, 9 November 1964.
3. El Universal, 17 October 1964.
4. The importance which the insurgents attach to fund-raising through the sale of clandestine bonds is indicated by police discovery of bonds with a face value of 1,000,000 bolívares (U.S. \$22,000) in a Caracas terrorist hideout. La Esfera, 21 October 1964. A case of attempted extortion of funds from Venezuelan businessmen under threat of terrorist attack is reported in El Nacional, 15 November 1964.

More insurgent arms are obtained through the numerous urban terrorist robberies of gun stores, sporting goods stores, and the private residences of military officers and other citizens authorized to possess arms. Arms are also picked up in attacks on individual policemen. Several attempts were made in early 1962 to procure arms by assaults on police and military posts and installations; the only real success, but a major one by insurgent standards, was the robbery of a naval school near La Guaira which netted 127 rifles.<sup>1</sup>

The exploits of the urban terrorists in arms procurement, however, have been counterbalanced by the repeated and at times heavy losses of arms by the rural guerrillas. In Spring 1962, for example, the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense reported the capture of 100 guerrilla rifles, submachine guns, shot-guns and pistols.<sup>2</sup> Guerrilla weapon losses in Falcón State as of late 1963 and early 1964 were reported as 60 rifles and submachine guns.<sup>3</sup> In November 1964 the Governor of Falcón State announced the capture of still another large lot of guerrilla weapons: 50 submachine guns, 30 rifles, and 40 pistols.<sup>4</sup>

Until the discovery in November 1963 of the Cuban arms cache on the ocean coast of Falcón State, Venezuelan military spokesmen consistently discounted newspaper reports that any arms had reached the insurgents from Cuba or from any other foreign sources.<sup>5</sup> In late 1964, President Leoni asserted that

1. La Esfera, 4 and 9 May 1962.
2. El Universal and La Esfera, 9 May 1962.
3. El Nacional, 6 April 1963. The authority for the statement is an unnamed Army officer.
4. El Universal, 19 November 1964.
5. El Universal, 12 April 1962 and 6 March 1963.

Cuba had sent "numerous arms" to the insurgents during the course of the year, but gave no details.<sup>1</sup>

Insurgent procurement of explosive materials is probably not a difficult task in view of the large quantities of explosives stocked by Venezuela's petroleum and construction industries. The country's chemical and petro-chemical industries also produce a number of explosive and incendiary materials, notably black powder, carbon, potassium chlorate, sulfur and sulfur derivatives, and nitrogen and nitric compounds. From these various industries, the insurgents have probably also drawn the skilled technicians who have manufactured some of their more sophisticated incendiary and bomb devices.

#### Types of Arms

The Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela have been armed with submachine guns, rifles, pistols, and revolvers. From time to time, shotguns, a few automatic rifles, and a few carbines have also been discovered in insurgent possession. Except for the shotguns and a few sporting rifles, all the insurgent arms whose capture has thus far been reported are of types discarded or in current use by Venezuelan military and police forces.<sup>2</sup>

Cuba attempted to add a new dimension to the insurgent arsenal in late 1963 by landing the following arms with appropriate ammunition in a secret cache on the ocean coast of Falcón State:

- 81 automatic rifles (Belgian manufacture)
- 31 submachine guns (Belgian manufacture)
- 5 mortars (M2, 60mm)
- 20 bazookas (M20, 3.5 in)
- 9 recoilless rifles (MI8A1, 57mm)

1. El Universal, 17 October 1964. The government also reported discovery of a smuggling ring which had brought in 200 revolvers from Miami to Caracas for sale to persons unable to secure an official permit to carry or possess arms. El Universal, 18 November 1964.
2. El Universal, 6 March 1963.

Venezuelan authorities intercepted the Cuban arms before they could reach the insurgents and later turned them over to an OAS team of advisers which also examined the types of weapons previously seized from the Castro-Communist insurgents operating in Venezuela. After detailed study, the OAS team concluded that the Cuban arms were of a type not previously used by the Venezuelan insurgents and that all arms captured from the insurgents prior to discovery of the Falcón cache were of the lighter varieties more normally used by insurgent forces.<sup>1</sup>

#### Incendiaries and Explosives

The incendiary device most often utilized by the Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela has been the simple Molotov cocktail. Hundreds, if not thousands, have been used in street violence and terrorist attacks; and thousands more have been confiscated by police in raids on insurgent hide-outs.<sup>2</sup> There is no record, however, that the Venezuelan insurgents have utilized the "M-16" device devised by Castro's guerrillas in which a Molotov cocktail is fired from a shotgun, with the cocktail fastened on the end of a long wooden rod.<sup>3</sup>

As the insurgency has progressed, the Castro-Communists have moved to more advanced types of incendiaries. Gasoline jelly has been used in terrorist fire attacks in Caracas since early 1963 and occasionally by terrorists in other cities of the country. Incendiary bombs have also been constructed with a base of live phosphorus.<sup>4</sup> For attacks on U.S. business properties and other prime targets, the insurgents have used sophisticated

1. Report of the OAS Committee investigating the Cuban arms cache, pp. 31, 53-59. After discovery of the Cuban cache, a 30mm mortar (presumably stolen from the Venezuelan Army rather than of Cuban provenance) was discovered in a terrorist hideout at Coro, the capital of Falcón State. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 473.
2. So many Molotov cocktails were manufactured that at least one man in Caracas made his living as a middleman selling empty bottles to the insurgents. El Nacional, 11 June 1963.
3. Guevara, On Guerrilla Warfare, pp. 41-42.
4. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 452.

incendiary devices which in the case of the \$4,500,000 fire in the Sears warehouse at Caracas in February 1963 were calculated to have produced a heat of 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>1</sup>

The most common explosive has been the homemade pipe bomb, or niple, constructed of varying lengths of sealed-off metal pipe, black powder, and a simple fuse. Pamphlet bombs, with a niple base, were used at Caracas in late 1963 and again in late 1964. Another variant of the niple is the booby-trap (cazabobo) which is usually concealed under a banner or within a box bearing the initials "FALN." When someone lifts the banner or the box, the bomb explodes.<sup>2</sup>

The Venezuelan insurgents have shown considerable skill in the manufacture of powerful dynamite and nitroglycerin time bombs, some of which have been powerful enough to knock out 300-ft reinforced concrete bridges, and one of which is known to have a charge of 130 pounds.<sup>3</sup> Most of the bombs incorporate a simple clock and battery mechanism. Wax has been used as a timing device in mountainous Venezuela, since it congeals at night and melts upon exposure to the morning sun.<sup>4</sup>

Dynamite has also been used to destroy oil pipelines, but the most common sabotage device is the carga hueca or "hollow charge," a small perforation device no larger than a hen's egg which is in wide use by the petroleum industry. The carga hueca is detonated against the surface of a pipeline with the aid of a dry cell battery; the oil which escapes is then ignited. A Venezuelan Minister of Interior Relations once described the carga hueca as "more dangerous than dynamite."<sup>5</sup>

1. Statement of the president of Sears in Caracas, as reported in Saturday Evening Post, 29 June-6 July 1963, pp. 30-31.
2. E.g., El Nacional, 13 November 1964.
3. E.g., Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 334-335.
4. El Universal, 29 July 1963.
5. El Nacional, 9 April 1963.

The grenades occasionally found in insurgent terrorist possession have either been stolen from military stores or are of painstaking laboratory construction, using tin cans, bottles, and plastic bottles, with a cork and finger ring attachment.<sup>1</sup> The insurgents have also constructed hundreds of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, accompanied by special booklets to familiarize insurgent personnel with their construction and use.<sup>2</sup> Government anti-guerrilla forces operating in the Falcón mountains of western Venezuela were reported in November 1964 to have cleared more than 90 of these mines from the approaches to one guerrilla base area.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence of Venezuelan insurgent skill in the manufacture of explosive devices may also be seen in the more exotic devices which have occasionally been employed in terrorist attacks. From time to time, newspapers have reported insurgent use of plastic bombs.<sup>4</sup> In December 1962 police reported discovery of bombs of unidentified construction but small enough to be concealed in paper drinking cups.<sup>5</sup> A few "letter bombs," disguised as ballots, were used at Caracas during the December 1963 elections in an effort to destroy ballot boxes.<sup>6</sup>

1. E.g., El Universal, 6 March and 13 December 1963.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, p. 405.
3. La Esfera, 30 November 1964.
4. E.g., El Universal, 11 March 1964.
5. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 314.
6. New York Times, 21 September 1964.

## Chapter 8

### INSURGENT SUPPLY SYSTEMS

Two factors have simplified the supply problem for the Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela. The bulk of their forces have always consisted of part-time urban terrorists, who can look after their own food and clothing requirements, rather than rural guerrillas. Secondly, Venezuela is a country in process of continuous industrial and commercial expansion thanks to the high national income derived from foreign petroleum sales. All the miscellaneous supplies needed to support the insurgency, from canned foods and camping equipment to mimeographs and radio communications equipment, are available in the well-stocked retail stores and warehouses of major Venezuelan cities; and the insurgents have carried out so many "expropriations" — i.e., robberies — from these establishments that it is probable that through this means alone they have amassed more than enough supplies to support all facets of their insurrection.

Caracas, the largest and most diversified commercial center in Venezuela, has experienced the greatest number of insurgent "expropriations". It is also a city in which many types of specialized equipment desired by the insurgents — e.g., radio equipment, mimeographs — are more easily obtainable than in the cities of the interior. For these reasons, it appears logical to identify Caracas as the major storage point for insurgent supplies and as the hub of two overlapping insurgent supply systems: one leading to terrorist cells in interior cities of Venezuela, the other to rural guerrilla zones like the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela.

#### Major Supply Depots

During the years 1960-1964, Venezuelan police have raided literally hundreds of insurgent supply caches in Caracas and other cities, including arms caches and workshops for the manufacture of bombs and incendiary

devices. The aggregate loss to the insurgents as the result of these discoveries was high, but in nearly every case the individual caches and workshops were too small to merit individual mention. Early in 1963, however, police found two insurgent supply depots in the Caracas area which are by far the largest yet discovered in Venezuela. A description of these depots provides an indication as to the scope and organization of the insurgents' stockpiling and logistical effort.

The first major supply depot, or more properly arsenal, was found accidentally in January 1963 after terrorist attacks on two rural villages imprudently called police attention to a steep mountain zone some 20 miles south of Caracas. The arsenal was located at a place called "Los Acosta" about two miles by jeep trail from the nearest main road. It was dispersed among several buildings previously owned by a commercial farming or mining company and was equipped with its own electric plant, radio transmitter-receiver, and an interior telephone system even though nearby villages had neither telephone nor telegraph service. The arsenal also contained a system for remote-control demolition which did not function.

The materiel found in the "Los Acosta" arsenal was described in a police communique as follows:

hundreds of hand bombs or grenades

great quantities of sacks of potassium chlorate and black powder

hundreds of dynamite sticks

workshop for the preparation of explosive devices equipped with drills, soldering irons, acetylene equipment, gas cylinders, metallic gas cylinders

anti-tank mines with the inscription FALN

hundreds of large bombs or mines with the markings FALN MV-1 and FLAN MV-4, together with literature explaining construction, mounting, performance, and use

thousands of electric detonators for explosives, large piles of shrapnel for bombs, thousands of meters of industrial fuses for use with explosives

25 rifles, 5 automatic rifles

7 mm cartridge belts

hundreds of lantern batteries and dry cell batteries for field telephones

cartridge pouches

more than 100 military uniforms.

Police reported that all the materiel found at "Los Acosta" had been taken in robberies in Caracas. The arsenal also contained so much subversive literature that, according to a newspaper report, two trucks were needed to haul it away.<sup>1</sup>

The "Los Acosta" arsenal probably functioned as a national supply center and arms depot not only for Caracas but for urban terrorists and rural guerrillas in other parts of the country. In February 1963, for example, National Guardsmen in the mountainous El Charal guerrilla zone of western Venezuela overran a guerrilla camp that was hastily abandoned by its occupants. Among the articles found were 12 anti-personnel mines with the same marking, FALN MV-1, as found in the "Los Acosta" arsenal. Army intelligence reported that the mines were not of a standard military type but were "home-made devices of ingenious construction and in perfect working order."<sup>2</sup>

The second large insurgent supply depot was found in a private Caracas residence in February 1963. Its contents, as described in a police communique, are chiefly of interest as indicating the miscellaneous types of supplies which the insurgents picked up in various robberies or used to obscure the trail and identity of urban terrorists:

1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 405-406; also El Universal, 6 January 1963.

2. El Universal, 6 March 1963.

medicines and medical supplies worth 50,000 bolivares  
(U.S. \$11,000) ]

radio transmitters and multigraphs robbed from stores in  
Caracas ]

addressograph machines; 10 dictaphones with accessories  
great quantities of office supplies and paper ]

3,000 copies of Guevara's book on guerrilla warfare ]

canned goods of various sizes and descriptions ]

men's and women's clothing, shirts, underwear ]

camping clothes, tents, binoculars ]

frogman equipment (2 sets) ]

dozens of machetes and saws; miscellaneous carpenter's tools ]

pistols and automatic weapons; ammunition for 7, 9, 22, 38,  
45, and 65 mm caliber arms; M-1 ammunition ]

pipe bombs (nipples) and materials for their manufacture;  
other bombs; materials for Molotov cocktails. ]

license plates and insignia belonging to assassinated policemen;  
other police license plates ]

equipment to falsify identification cards, false identification  
cards ]

police and military uniforms ]

registration papers from stolen automobiles ]

extra sets of license plates for automobiles used in terrorist  
attacks. ]

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1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp.  
412-413; also El Universal, 8 February 1963.

### Supply to Interior Cities

Movement of supplies from insurgent depots in Caracas to terrorist hideouts in the interior cities of Venezuela is probably accomplished entirely by automobile, truck, and jitney cab over the major highways of the country.<sup>1</sup> Police have almost no chance of intercepting these supplies, unless tipped off by informants, because of the heavy protective screen of ordinary civilian traffic. For example, the average daily number of automobiles and other motor vehicles on the main Caracas-Valencia highway has run in the neighborhood of 10,000 vehicles in recent years. West of Valencia, and in northeastern Venezuela, daily traffic tends to average 1,500-3,000 vehicles on the main highways and 500 vehicles on the more important feeder roads.<sup>2</sup>

How large a volume of insurgent supplies is moved from Caracas, on an average daily or monthly rate, can only be a matter for conjecture. The contents of the largest insurgent supply depot yet discovered in an interior city of Venezuela, at Coro in Falcón State, would suggest that shipments are fairly small and are limited as much as possible to essentials:

- 1 30 mm mortar
- 17 rebuilt Enfield rifles
- 1 automatic rifle, with 1,030 rounds; also 765 rounds of 7.5 mm caliber ammunition
- 1 large multigraph (from a store previously robbed by insurgents in Caracas)
- 1 portable Bendix electric plant, 115 volts
- 1 Hammarlund radio transmitter-receiver and accessories
- medicines
- military uniforms
- men's and women's clothing
- sales receipts for purchases in Caracas stores.

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- 1. Jitney cabs ply between all the major cities of Venezuela and have been used both by the insurgents and smugglers. E.g., El Nacional, 28 February 1964; La Republica, 19 June 1964.
  - 2. Venezuela, Ministry of Public Works, Memoria, 1964, pp. I-83, I-98.

The Coro depot served both as a supply point for the urban terrorists and for the rural guerrillas operating in the Falcón mountains. Police expressed the opinion that the Kammarlund radio transmitter-receiver was the equipment previously used by Coro terrorists to broadcast subversive propaganda which was identified as coming from a guerrilla radio station "somewhere in the mountains of Falcón."<sup>1</sup>

A measure of the insurgents' ability, or confidence in their ability, to move large quantities of materiel and supplies from Caracas to the interior of Venezuela, or in the reverse direction, is provided by the Cuban arms cache found on 1 November 1963 on an ocean beach of the Paraguaná Peninsula in Falcón State. The Cuban weapons weighed approximately three tons and were intended for use in Caracas about mid-November 1963. The means by which the insurgents proposed to bring the Cuban arms to Caracas are unknown: it might have been either road transport or coastal launch. Whatever the means, the insurgents must have been confident of their ability to move the arms from Falcón to Caracas. They must also have convinced the Cuban authorities beforehand that the move was feasible.<sup>2</sup>

#### Supplies to Rural Guerrillas

Most supplies for the Castro-Communist guerrillas in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela are probably sent by road from Caracas to terrorist hideouts in cities and towns in the vicinity of the two guerrilla zones. The Caracas supplies, together with materials furnished by nearby urban terrorist groups, are then sent into the guerrilla regions by suitable local means of transport. In Falcón, where there are a good

1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 472-473; also El Nacional, 17 December 1963.
2. The inclusion of a 16 ft. aluminum boat and outboard motor in the Cuban arms cache suggests that the insurgents may have intended to transship the arms to a fishing boat which would then have landed at Maracaibo, Puerto Cabello, or La Guaira. In all three cases, road transport would have been required for the final leg of the journey to Caracas.

number of feeder roads into the mountains, the insurgents are known to have used a market truck equipped with a secret compartment for arms, clothing, medicines, and canned and powdered foods.<sup>1</sup> In El Charal, a more rugged and primitive mountain region, supplies have been transported to the guerrillas by mules or burros.<sup>2</sup>

The insurgents also used air drops in late 1961 or early 1962 to supply at least one rural guerrilla encampment, Turimquire in eastern Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> In August 1962 the top guerrilla commander in El Charal urged his Caracas contacts to consider the possibility of supplying his forces by air and promised to reconnoiter two suitable drop sites.<sup>4</sup> The possibilities which may have existed for this type of supply operation are suggested by the fact that neither the El Charal nor the Falcón guerrilla zone was closed to overflights by commercial or private sports planes until the Venezuelan Government took such action in November 1964.<sup>5</sup>

A coastal launch was apparently used by the insurgents as of Summer 1964 to supply guerrillas who briefly appeared in the "El Bachiller" mountains southeast of Caracas.<sup>6</sup>

The extent to which the rural guerrillas of Venezuela have depended upon external supplies has probably varied at different periods in the insurgent history. The first guerrilla units sent into the field (late 1961 and early 1962)

1. El Nacional, 5 January 1964. The market women who travel regularly between the Falcón mountains and Coro are said to have been an important means of guerrilla supply. El Universal, 13 October 1963.
2. El Nacional, 9 June 1963.
3. La Esfera, 3 December 1962; also the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense communique published in La Esfera and El Universal, 9 May 1962.
4. Captured guerrilla correspondence reproduced in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 295.
5. El Nacional, 3 November 1964. Unverified peasant reports of air drops to the guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal are cited in El Nacional, 16 September 1964; El Universal, 27 and 28 November 1964.
6. El Nacional, 5 July 1964; also for a report of the capture of a coastal launch carrying insurgent propaganda off the coast of eastern Venezuela, El Universal, 12 August 1964.

seem to have been supplied with canned foods, sardines, and powdered milk that were intended to give them a measure of self-sufficiency and avoid the necessity of too heavy reliance upon peasant food supplies.<sup>1</sup> A recent publication by a Venezuelan Communist author suggests that this strategy may have been discarded on the ground that it tended to isolate the guerrillas from the "masses." According to the same source, it is now recognized that it is essential for the guerrillas "to have hundreds of helpers, people who would keep the partisans informed, supply them with food, ensure contacts and at the same time replenish their ranks."<sup>2</sup> In effect, therefore, the guerrillas may be attempting to reduce their dependence upon Caracas and other external sources of supply and to rely as much as possible upon supplies available within the guerrilla zones.

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1. E.g., La Esfera, 12 February 1963.

2. Carlos López, "The Communist Party of Venezuela and the Present Situation," World Marxist Review, October 1964, p. 25.

**PART III - URBAN AND URBAN-RURAL INSURGENCY  
AND COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS**

## Chapter 9

### URBAN INSURGENCY

The Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela differs from other "wars of national liberation" which world Communist parties are currently supporting in that by far the greatest part of the revolutionary violence has been the work of urban or urban-based insurgents, rather than rural guerrillas. Consequently, although the guerrillas in Venezuela are a subject of operational interest in their own right, and will be studied more intensively in future chapters of this report, it is an analysis of urban insurgency actions that will provide an insight into the insurrectionary techniques most often employed by the Castro-Communists in their efforts to seize political power.

Two main types of urban insurgency actions have developed in Venezuela. This chapter will examine Castro-Communist techniques of revolutionary violence in the major cities of the country.

The next chapter will describe the motorized attacks perpetrated by urban-based terrorists in suburban and rural areas of Venezuela. A third chapter will examine Venezuelan police and military responses to the urban and motorized urban-rural insurgency and seek to draw conclusions of relevance to military counterinsurgency planning.

#### Street Violence

Castro-Communist urban insurgency in Venezuela has developed in the midst of city populations in which the masses are either opposed to the insurgency or apathetic to its appeals for popular support.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the

1. In the early years of the Castro-Communist violence, the dominant public attitude in Venezuelan cities towards the insurgency may well have been what President Betancourt once described as marginamiento — i.e., "we'll stand on the sidelines; let the police and the insurgents fight it out." A U.S. observer who visited Caracas in late 1961 also remarked on the public apathy towards the insurgency struggle which he said was viewed almost as "a private skirmish between the forces of law and their opponents." The heavy turnout of urban voters in the December 1963 elections, despite insurgent threats of death, probably indicates that urban opinion has become more hostile to the insurgents the longer their violence has continued. Rómulo Betancourt, Dialogo con el país, 20 May 1963; Charles Abrams, Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World, Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1964, pp. 287-288.

Castro-Communists have never succeeded in their efforts to employ two of the most formidable instruments of urban insurrection: the large-scale urban riot and the revolutionary general strike.<sup>1</sup> The insurgents have even failed in their efforts to induce peaceful popular abstention from important civic events in Venezuelan cities, such as the visit of President Kennedy to Caracas in December 1961 and the December 1963 elections.<sup>2</sup>

Lack of popular support, however, did not prevent the insurgents from staging riots and other acts of street violence in Venezuela during 1960-1963 which left scores of persons dead and hundreds wounded. But for these endeavors, the insurgents were obliged to rely almost entirely on their own terrorist effectives and on a few hundred university and secondary school students, particularly those enrolled in youth organizations of the Venezuelan Communist Party and the Castroite Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR).<sup>3</sup> The rest of the urban populace usually took no part in the disturbances and, as a general rule, merely stood aside and left the students to the police and military.<sup>4</sup>

1. Insurgent efforts to induce a voluntary revolutionary general strike in November 1960 were a complete failure. A second strike call in November 1963 was a partial success in Caracas only because it was enforced by terroristic means to be described later in this chapter.
2. "On important occasions, such as the visit of the late President of the United States and during the recent elections, they [the insurgents] have put forward an arrogant and intense propaganda campaign for the purpose of provoking fear and abstention. But they have not succeeded in any degree because they do not possess the necessary forces, nor the support of the people, nor the necessary courage to oppose the [preventive] measures taken by the Armed Forces." Extract from a Venezuelan Government communique published in El Universal, 6 December 1963.
3. The predominant role of university and secondary school students in the insurgent riots is noted in a statement by the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela in U.S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 52.
4. Probably the only significant occasion in which a sector of the general urban populace joined in the insurgent riots occurred at Caracas in October 1960, when student rioting was accompanied by an outbreak of criminal looting in one of the city's largest public housing districts.

The usual tactic followed in the largest Caracas student riots of 1960-1963 was to mass hundreds of students from the Central University and the secondary schools and move them towards the center of the city. Enroute, passing buses and automobiles were stopped and burned and flaming street barricades were erected with gasoline-soaked automobile tires and other available materials. Older students were likely to be armed with Molotov cocktails; a few carried pistols or acid. Students posted in the Central University grounds, which are off-limits to the police by reason of the university's autonomous status, added to the confusion and the casualties with sniper fire.<sup>1</sup>

From mid-1961 onwards, the insurgents in Caracas also began to use small "shock brigades" as auxiliaries to main bodies of student rioters. While police were occupied with the principal centers of disturbance, small groups of youths fanned out to burn vehicles in other streets and to erect barricades.<sup>2</sup> Snipers fired from rooftops, high-rise apartment houses, and rapidly moving automobiles.<sup>3</sup>

Improved techniques of street violence, however, could not conceal from the insurgents the fact that student riots in Caracas and other cities were of little practical value so long as the general public kept apart from the violence and merely waited for government forces to restore order. After January 1962, therefore, the insurgents seldom resorted to rioting and concentrated mainly on terrorism. Two techniques were employed. The first involved the use of small

1. In January 1962 the snipers at the Central University brought down a Venezuelan Air Force helicopter which was hovering over the university grounds on a reconnaissance mission. El Universal, 23 February 1962.
2. Some typical "shock brigade" actions were the following, which occurred at Caracas on a single day in July 1961. In one part of the city, students (some of them armed with pistols) blocked traffic on a main street and attempted to set some automobiles afire. On another street they stopped a bus and forced the driver to turn it sideways, again to block traffic. In another street they attempted to burn cars using fire extinguishers filled with a mixture of gasoline and oil. El Universal, 13 July 1961.
3. On 22 January 1962 alone, police in Caracas reported 13 persons wounded by snipers roving through the city in automobiles. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 248.

terrorist units in acts of robbery, sabotage, arson, kidnapping, and assassination of policemen and National Guardsmen. This type of urban terrorism is still operative. A second technique, mass terror, was attempted during 1963.

#### Small-Unit Terror

Tactical Organization. The terrorist units employed by the Castro-Communist insurgents in the cities of Venezuela bear the title of Urban Tactical Units (UTCs). In Caracas, where the majority of terrorists are concentrated, there appear to be several UTC Brigades, each made up of UTC Detachments which seem to number about 30 personnel.<sup>1</sup> The type of person likely to be found in a UTC Detachment is indicated by a police description of 16 members of the "Toribio García" Detachment rounded up at Caracas in March 1964: one doctor, one female school principal, one female school teacher, three taxi drivers, one calculating machine operator, one social worker, three men with criminal records, and three former police agents expelled from the security police (DIGEPOL).<sup>2</sup>

Each UTC Detachment appears to be divided into subsections. A hard-core terrorist group of perhaps 5-8 men may specialize in bolder actions like robbery, sabotage, arson, and murders of police and National Guardsmen. Another group of 5-8 persons may specialize in collecting funds and supplies for the Detachment or canned food and medicine for Castro-Communist rural guerrillas.<sup>3</sup> Another may specialize in robberies of the homes of military personnel in order to obtain arms and money.<sup>4</sup>

Student terrorists enrolled at the Central University of Caracas appear to be enlisted in special brigades, of probably not more than 10 to 15 personnel,

1. Washington Post, 28 March 1963.
2. El Universal, 8 March 1964. As in the case of other UTCs, the name "Toribio García" is probably that of an insurgent killed while performing a terrorist mission.
3. E.g., Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 380.
4. Ibid., 1964, p. 329.

which function as auxiliary UTC Detachments. Two types of student brigades have been established. Class "AA" brigades have a hard core of about five students who are used for actual terrorist assaults, with the remaining personnel employed in tasks like intelligence collection, training of new members, and rounding up supplies. Class "A" brigades are used only for intelligence collection and propaganda work.<sup>1</sup>

Bases. The Castro-Communist terrorists in Caracas and other cities appear to work mainly out of private residences, apartments, and offices located in built-up urban areas, where masonry construction offers the best security against detection. Terrorists are recruited from the flimsy slum shanties, or ranchos, which abound in all the principal Venezuelan cities, but it is probable that few terrorist bases are actually located in these neighborhoods because of the greater danger of discovery.

The Central University of Caracas and state universities in some other Venezuelan cities are also favored terrorist hideouts because student residences are not subject to close surveillance by university authorities or to police search except by special and seldom granted court order. A number of professors, particularly in the Central University at Caracas, are also favorable to the insurgency. As a result, it is not difficult for student insurgents to use university grounds for clandestine training sessions, as a base for terrorist actions, and as a place to store arms, incendiaries, and explosives.<sup>2</sup>

1. El Nacional, 25 May 1964.
2. The student terrorists in Venezuelan universities represent only a tiny fraction of total student enrollment. According to testimony by the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela in February 1963, there were only 400 terrorists in the Central University at Caracas out of a total student body of about 17,000. The terrorists thus operate by sufferance of their fellow students, who presumably feel obligated by considerations of student loyalty not to tell what they know about on-campus insurgent activities. Student terrorist documents which have fallen into police hands also indicate that the insurgents have made a practice of frightening potential student "squealers" into silence. U.S. House of Representatives, Castro-Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere, 1963, p. 52; El Nacional, 25 May 1964.

Plans. The success which has attended many small-unit terrorist actions in Caracas and other cities of Venezuela is often attributable to careful preplanning. For example, a captured insurgent document indicates that prior to undertaking a robbery or arson attack on an important business establishment or factory, it is standard terrorist procedure to collect and evaluate the following intelligence data:

**A. External Survey**

1. Make a check to determine what police detachments are posted at the entrance to the plant and on its grounds. How many? How armed? When are the shifts changed? Is there a civilian guard for the plant? How many? How armed? When are the shifts changed?
2. What is the pattern of mobile police patrol in the general vicinity of the plant?
3. What stationary police posts are located near the plant?
4. At what hours is there least movement of civilians past the plant?
5. What is the least guarded point, in terms of space and time?

**B. Internal Survey**

1. What police detachments are located inside the plant? How many? How armed?
2. What civilian guards are inside the plant? How many? Observe their movements.
3. What are the least guarded points, in terms of space and time?
4. What are the alarm systems? How do they function?
5. Locate the entrance door. Make a detailed plan of doors, windows, and most important points.
6. What is the number of employees? In each department, which people are already on our side, which can be won over to our side, and which are on the employer's side? Which people are most reliable?

7. General observations. Eating periods, rest periods. Hours when cleaning personnel are present. Telephone switchboard and extensions. Arms in possession of executives and employees. Names and home addresses of executives.<sup>1</sup>

In the great majority of cases, it has probably been unnecessary for the terrorists themselves to undertake more than a casual advance survey of a target. Most of the detailed intelligence required for the prosecution of an attack has probably been supplied by "inside men" employed in the installation or familiar with it through repeated visits as delivery men or messengers.<sup>2</sup> These collaborators have also been used to make advance preparations for an attack, such as leaving a vital door unlocked shortly before a terrorist action.<sup>3</sup>

If preliminary reconnaissance indicated that assault on a target was feasible, the terrorists often drew up a written operations plan. The contents of one plan, drawn up in preparation for an unrealized attack on a Caracas match factory, were described in a police communique issued in February 1962:

1. Personnel

Eight men, each armed with an automatic pistol.

2. Objective

To secure explosive materials such as potassium chlorate, amorphous phosphorus, sulfur, mineral powders, and paraffin.

1. Captured Venezuelan Communist Party document, quoted in El Universal and El Nacional, 15 June 1963. Also El Universal, 17 January 1964, reporting police discovery in a terrorist hideout of a plan of the Sears Roebuck store in an eastern city of Venezuela which contained "the names of all employees in the various departments, as well as minute notations as to their movements during the hours of work and as to the entrances and exits of the store."
2. In April 1963, police at Caracas captured plans for a bank robbery which contained the names of all bank employees, notations as to their political affiliations, details of the bank's security arrangements, and the names of the Communist cell members in the bank who provided this information to the terrorists. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 421.
3. E.g., the terrorist attack on the Ministry of Interior Relations garage in Caracas. El Nacional, 9 April 1963.

### 3. Transportation

Personnel to arrive in a car and a truck. To depart in the same conveyances and in a truck belonging to the match company.

### 4. Operations

a. Insure cooperation of executive and technical plant personnel by prior detention of wives and children who will be brought to the plant. Cooperation of other plant workers to be secured by threats.

b. Place anti-personnel mines at entrance to plant and in its grounds as a defensive precaution against the arrival of police patrols while the attack is in progress. Leave one access to the plant clear of mines in case of need for a rapid escape.

c. After removal of explosive materials is completed, disrobe employees, wives, and children and lock them in plant storage areas so as to prevent notification of police.

d. At the end of the attack, remove half of the anti-personnel mines, leaving the other half to destroy police agents when they arrive to investigate.

The police communique also noted that one of the terrorists who helped to plan the attack on the match factory was employed at the plant and held the position of technical draftsman.<sup>1</sup>

A good example of an actual terrorist attack which obviously required careful advance planning was the January 1963 robbery in which a unit of 15 terrorists carried off paintings worth more than \$6,000,000 from an exhibition of French art masterpieces at a Caracas museum. To avoid attracting attention, the terrorists arrived at the museum in two automobiles and in an unmarked Chevrolet panel truck equipped with a small roof antenna to give it the

1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 355. The importance attached by the terrorists to the preparation of written operational plans is also indicated by the police report that no less than 774 of such plans were captured from the insurgents in 1963 alone. Ibid., 1964, p. 398.

appearance of a police truck. The raid occurred at 3:15 p.m., at a time when hundreds of school children were visiting the museum, so that guards would be reluctant to use their weapons. The attack was carried out in perfect order, with five terrorists removing the pictures while the other ten stood guard. The three vehicles used in the robbery were later found abandoned in different parts of Caracas.<sup>1</sup>

Another example of advance planning can be seen in the \$4,500,000 fire which destroyed the main Sears warehouse at Caracas in February 1963. A group of terrorists arrived by automobile at 9:30 p.m. and disarmed the three guards on duty in the warehouse office. They next rammed a large Sears delivery truck, probably one prepared for the purpose, through the corrugated steel wall of the warehouse. Explosive and advanced incendiary devices were placed at various locations and with such expertise that the warehouse, which occupied an entire city block, was burned to the ground in 30 minutes. The fire did not start until the terrorists were back in their automobile and were already moving away from the scene.<sup>2</sup>

Targets. An analysis of 334 small-unit terrorist attacks in Caracas reported in the Venezuelan press for period July 1962 - July 1964 is indicative of the types of targets most frequently selected by the insurgents.

<u>Targets</u>	<u>No. of Attacks</u>
Venezuelan-owned business properties and banks	91
Venezuela Police and National Guard personnel, residences, and installations	60
Venezuelan military personnel, residences, and installations	39
Venezuelan government offices, national and municipal; government personnel and residences	33
Mass communications media	16
Public utilities	6

1. El Universal, 17 and 18 January 1963. The raid on the museum was a publicity stunt, since the paintings were returned unharmed.
2. El Universal, 9 and 10 February 1963.

<u>Targets</u>	<u>No. of Attacks</u>
Political party offices, personnel, and meetings	9
Private Venezuelan citizens and residences	42
U.S. business and diplomatic properties; residences of U.S. diplomatic and military personnel	36
Non-U.S. foreign-owned business properties	2

Most of the terrorist attacks on Venezuelan-owned properties were robberies; those on U.S. business and diplomatic properties generally involved some use of incendiaries and explosives. The attacks were usually against physical, rather than human, targets with the notable exception of policemen and National Guardsmen.<sup>1</sup>

Miscellaneous urban violence actions, such as bomb explosions in the streets and the burning of buses and automobiles, have also accompanied the small-unit terrorist actions. Most of this miscellaneous violence, however, is probably the work of youth "shock brigades" rather than the terrorist units, since the latter are probably reserved for more important actions.

Tactics. The small-unit terrorists in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities have operated in the mobile hit-and-run style of modern gangsters, usually proceeding to and from their targets in stolen automobiles. The most usual method of shooting down policemen and National Guardsmen is a gangster-like submachinegun blast from a moving automobile.

The essentially sneak character of the terrorist attacks was noted in a government communique issued in December 1963: "Until now, all the actions of the urban extremist groups have been executed in a surprise, cunning, and cowardly manner. . . . When they have succeeded in sabotage, robbery, and incendiary actions, and in other acts which offend the dignity of man and the

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1. Police have occasionally found elaborate terrorist lists of government officials, political party leaders, and other prominent persons marked down for assassination at an appropriate moment. The terrorists have also kidnapped a visiting Spanish soccer player and two U. S. military officers but, in each case, have released the men unharmed.

modesty of our women, they have not proceeded in a manly way, but like common criminals who only use surprise, deceit, and cowardice."<sup>1</sup>

### Mass Terror

The principal psychological effect which the Venezuelan insurgents have hoped to produce by their small-unit urban terrorist attacks is undoubtedly the atmosphere of public "restlessness and anxiety" described in Guevara's passages on urban guerrilla warfare.<sup>2</sup> Unrest and anxiety, however, are not enough to assure insurgency victory. The public must also lose confidence in the government's ability to control the situation: it must be led, in effect, to believe that its best hope of safety lies in obeying and abetting the terrorists rather than in lending support to the constituted authorities.<sup>3</sup>

The Castro-Communists in Venezuela attempted during 1963 to produce this second, and usually decisive, psychological effect by engaging in attempts at mass urban terrorism on a scale never previously seen in a Latin American country. Two techniques were principally employed: sniping from rooftops and other elevated points, and street violence by small "shock brigades" which set fire to buses and automobiles, strewed tacks and erected barricades, and carried out ambushes of police and National Guard patrols. These techniques were employed in several Venezuelan cities, but nowhere with such determination as in Caracas. An analysis of this city's experience will therefore provide the best case study of the techniques of mass terrorism employed by the insurgents.

The choice of Caracas as the principal arena for mass terror was indicated by a number of considerations. It is the national capital, largest city, and the economic and cultural nerve center of Venezuela. It is also the city in which the Castro-Communists have their largest numerical following, their largest terrorist force, and the clandestine headquarters of their insurgency movement.

1. El Universal, 6 December 1963.
2. Guevara, On Guerrilla Warfare, p. 29.
3. See the analysis of urban terrorist tactics and objectives by Col. de Rocquigny of the French Army in The Military Review (Fort Leavenworth), February 1959, pp. 93-99.

The Castro-Communists had further reason to be encouraged in a mass terror attempt at Caracas by reason of the topographical layout of the city. Caracas is crowded into a narrow east-west basin, of general Y-shape, which is overshadowed by steep mountains that provide a natural vantage point for snipers. The numerous high-rise office buildings and apartment houses in the crowded western sector of the city provide still more suitable sniper points. By reason of its general Y-pattern, Caracas is also vitally dependent on a few east-west arterial boulevards which are choked at many hours of the day and night with swarms of motor vehicles. Only a handful of street "shock brigades," judiciously distributed, are therefore needed to tie up or obstruct traffic along the major routes on which the normal functioning of Caracas depends.<sup>1</sup>

One of the earliest insurgent ventures into mass terror at Caracas occurred on 23 January 1963. On this occasion, as in all the other mass terror attempts to be described, nearly all the insurgent violence was concentrated in the western sector of the city which contains the principal business districts and the main offices of national and municipal government agencies.

Two days before the mass terror attempt of January 1963, leaflets were scattered about Caracas warning the public to prepare for insurgent violence on 23 January, the anniversary of the overthrow of the dictator, Pérez Jiménez, in 1958. In the early morning hours of the 23rd, roving squads of street terrorists erected flaming barricades of automobile tires and boxes along main traffic routes. Elsewhere what the police described as "burning acid" was

1. By reason of its crowded and narrow mountain basin, Caracas has also been described as a natural sounding box which tends to magnify the psychological effect of any terrorist action far out of proportion to the actual event. "This is a city ideal for alarms. . . As soon as the least act of sabotage is committed, the news spreads like wildfire from North to South, from East to West. . . . It is enough to set the orchestra going if a pack of young rascals in La Charneca throws stones at a highway, or if a shot is heard somewhere. . . . and above all if, within a few minutes, a police patrol is seen." Juan Campos, "Caracas, desconcertada," *Panoramas* (Mexico City), September-October 1963, p. 76. (The word order of the original is slightly changed in the above quotation.)

poured out in the streets. At 8:30 a.m. a gasoline service station was attacked and set afire; two others were unsuccessfully attacked for the same purpose. The disorders died down towards noon; but when it was announced that they would resume later in the day, many shopkeepers closed their establishments.

In the afternoon, the "shock brigades" went again into action, this time joined by scattered sniper fire and bomb explosions in several parts of the city. Scores of passing automobiles and trucks were damaged by rock throwing; several were destroyed in Molotov cocktail ambushes. The violence continued into the night hours with more sniping, more automobiles set afire, and more street barricades. One person was killed; at least 29 were wounded.<sup>1</sup>

Another, and more successful, application of mass terror occurred at Caracas on the night of 13 September 1963. Snipers fired from the roofs of apartment houses and private residences in several parts of the city, killing at least one person and wounding five. Simultaneously, "shock brigades" erected barricades, fired at passing cars, and burned three buses. The "shock brigades" also placed so many tacks and nails in the streets that traffic between the eastern and western parts of the city was virtually paralyzed. Police and military patrols who attempted to clear out the "shock brigades" and the obstructions to traffic were attacked under cover of darkness by ground and roof-top sniper fire.<sup>2</sup>

The largest outburst of mass terror in Caracas occurred on 19 November 1963, when the Castro-Communists attempted to enforce a call for a revolutionary general strike. On the day preceding, businessmen in all parts of the city received telephone messages warning them to honor the strike. During the night and early morning hours, snipers shot out street lights in some of the city and kept residents awake with bursts of gunfire. In the early morning hours, "shock brigades" built flaming barricades and ordered shops that opened for business to shut down. Tacks and nails were strewn about in great quantities

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1. El Universal, 24 January 1963.
  2. El Nacional, 14 September 1963.

during the early morning hours and to such effect that hundreds of automobiles were stranded with punctured tires. Other vehicles were attacked from ambush by terrorists using homemade pipe bombs (nipes) and Molotov cocktails. Police patrols were attacked with stones and gunfire.

Snipers also stepped up their attack after daybreak, firing from rooftops, apartment houses, and hillsides in the western sector of the city, and continuing throughout the day despite the counterefforts of an estimated 5,000 police and military. Twelve persons were killed in the gunfire; more than 70 were wounded. Normal business operations in the western half of Caracas were almost totally paralyzed by the middle of the day.<sup>1</sup>

Mass terror, however, is a difficult operation to sustain in the face of resolute government counteraction and, more importantly, if terrorists operate amid an unfriendly population which is only anxious for the violence to end so that it can resume its usual activities. During the late hours of 19 November 1963, and into the following day, police and military units in Caracas pursued the snipers and "shock brigades" and arrested more than 750 persons. On the second day of the attempted general strike, despite gunfire and street violence which left 5 persons dead and 15 wounded, life in Caracas was virtually back to normal. By 21 November, the attempt at mass terror was broken.<sup>2</sup>

The insurgents promised a renewal of mass terror in Caracas on Election Day, 1 December 1963, in an effort to frighten large numbers of voters away from the polls. But on this occasion, the threat was almost entirely one of words, for the insurgents attempted no more than a few scattered sniper and bombing actions.

Mass terror, with its combination of sniper fire and "shock brigade" action, is the most original urban insurgency technique developed by the Castro-Communists in Venezuela. If its intimidatory effect in Caracas was limited

1. El Universal, and El Nacional, 20 November 1963.

2. El Universal and El Nacional, 21 and 22 November 1963; New York Times, 21 November 1963.

to those brief occasions on which the insurgents backed up their threats with substantial force, this was probably because three years of continual insurgency violence had conditioned Caracas residents to take what one U.S. newspaper correspondent described as "a detached attitude towards all but the most intensive terrorist outbreaks."<sup>1</sup> Major cities in other Latin American countries, however, have not passed through the same preliminary baptism of insurgent fire as Caracas. Mass terror may therefore be a tactic which urban rebels may yet apply to greater effect in other countries of the hemisphere. Anticipation of this contingency, and preparation against it, may well be one of the more important tasks for urban counterinsurgency planners in Latin America.

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1. New York Times, 21 November 1963.

## Chapter 10

### MOTORIZED URBAN-RURAL INSURGENCY

Venezuela in recent decades has experienced a transportation revolution that has endowed it with a better national system of paved highways and a larger per capita fleet of motor vehicles than any other country in Latin America. This circumstance, in turn, has encouraged and led to a notable broadening out in the geographic range of Castro-Communist urban insurgent operations. Instead of limiting their attacks only to city confines, the urban insurgents have roved out on many occasions by automobile or truck along the modern highways of Venezuela to attack targets located in the near or distant countryside.

Three types of motorized urban-rural insurgency operations have developed. Some extend only to targets in the vicinity of cities and towns like Barcelona, Maturin, El Tigre, Caracas, Maracay, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Barinas, Coro, and Maracaibo. Others reach into more remote rural areas to attack targets like oil pipelines and small villages. Finally, on a few occasions, motor-borne urban terrorists have attempted to provide operational support to the rural guerrillas in the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela by diversionary attacks on targets located to the rear of Army forces engaged in anti-guerrilla operations.

#### Suburban Insurgency

A suburb, by usual definition, is any populated place within commuting distance of a central city. A suburban area often contains, in addition to suburbs, a number of industrial plants and public utility installations on which the normal functioning of the central city depends. To the urban terrorist, therefore, a suburban area constitutes an inviting target zone if it is within easy reach by automobile from his in-city base. In addition, there are suburban as well as urban terrorists in Venezuela.

The result is that three patterns of suburban insurgency operations have developed: urban-suburban, intra-suburban, and suburban-urban.

The most common type of suburban insurgency actions in Venezuela have been small-unit terrorist attacks for purposes of robbery, arson, and/or sabotage. Literally hundreds of such actions have occurred, usually with the terrorists masquerading as peaceful motorists before and after an attack.

Another common type of Venezuelan suburban insurgent operation has been the surprise attack on a small village. Groups of three to eight terrorists, traveling in one or two automobiles, descend on a village prefecture building housing the mayor's office and local police station. They disarm the one or two policemen on duty, paint subversive slogans on the village walls, perhaps summon the villagers to a propaganda meeting, and then depart. These attacks have occurred by day and by night; to ensure success in the operation, telephone and telegraph lines (if any) leading to the village are usually cut beforehand.<sup>1</sup>

On a few occasions, suburban insurgents have gone beyond the small-scale village attacks previously described and have attempted operations involving strike forces of as many as 40 men. These more ambitious actions are exceptional, but two deserve special mention inasmuch as they indicate the larger operational possibilities of automobile-borne terrorist action.

The largest suburban terrorist action yet recorded in Venezuela was the September 1962 attack on the village of El Hatillo (Population: 2,941), some 15 road miles south of Caracas. A force of 35 to 40 Caracas terrorists, traveling in five automobiles and three panel trucks, converged on the objective in the early morning hours. The attackers divided into eight groups: one seized and disarmed the four policemen on duty in the village

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1. E.g., El Universal, 19 January; 12 and 21 February; 30 August; 4 and 15 October; 9, 15, 16, and 21 November; 14 December 1963.

prefecture, while the others attacked the local telephone and telegraph offices, two political party headquarters, and a gasoline service station. The entire operation lasted only a half-hour; by the time police reinforcements arrived, the attackers were already two hours away from the village.<sup>1</sup>

A more ambitious attack in the style of the El Hatillo operation was attempted in October 1963 by 20 terrorists on the suburb of Baruta (Population: 45,572), less than 10 road miles south of Caracas. In the early hours of the afternoon, five terrorists unsuccessfully attempted to take over the Baruta police station, while two men wrecked the telephone exchange, and another two men attacked the telegraph office. The assailants then retreated to the northern end of the town where other terrorists had stationed vehicles for a retreat to Caracas.<sup>2</sup>

Suburban terrorists in Venezuela have also attempted on a few occasions to attack isolated military and police installations of larger size than the usual town or village police station. The most successful operation was the April 1962 robbery of the Naval School at Mamo, a small village (Population: 612), some 20 miles northwest of Caracas. Ten terrorists, moving by automobile and truck, carried off 127 rifles from the Naval School armory.<sup>3</sup>

Another type of suburban insurgency operation, contemplated but apparently never realized, is described in a captured plan for frontal assault on a National Guard post in the town of Puerto Cumarebo (Population: 8,033), some 30 road miles east of Coro in Falcón State:

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1. El Universal and El Nacional, 1 October 1962.
2. El Universal and El Nacional, 14 October 1963.
3. El Universal, 21 April 1962.

T      Attack Plan X-2 concerns the National Guard station at Puerto  
R      Cumarebo. It is indicated on page one of the plan as Objective H-6 in Zone  
N      D-13 and in Capture Zone AN-5.

A      The station is located approximately 4 km from the town of  
A      Cumarebo. On the north side it is close to the ocean; on the south side, a  
N      secondary road intersects with main highway. . .and there is also a low-  
lying mountain spur. To the east and west, there is an arid and semi-desert  
zone crossed by the highways to Morón and Cumarebo.

S      Plan X-2 will consist of a rapid and violent attack on the National  
L      Guard building, after the forces are situated and entrenched in the Zone  
A      ABCD indicated on the map. This zone is outside the line of fire from  
N      Zones E-1 and E-2 and the first and second 20 mm batteries.

A      You will fire continuously at the building for 5 minutes, after which  
T      the "Brownie" machine gun will go into operation and cover the entire area  
O      marked AD. There will be a slight pause to study the reaction.

I      Immediately the entrenched elements will throw explosives against  
O      the wall around the station, thereby destroying and preventing any attempt at  
N      defense from the flanks. A concentrated machinegun burst will prepare the  
way for the entrenched elements to penetrate into the zone [of the building],  
using grenades and gunfire until they have gained entrance into the interior.

The guerrilla corps will proceed to disarm all the National Guardsmen, and to carry off all arms, munitions, and equipment. A retreat will be undertaken as soon as this operation is completed. The lowest-ranking National Guardsman found on the premises will be taken as a hostage. The building will be blown up with dynamite after leaving it.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 42.

Suburban terrorists have also operated for brief periods as guerrillas in mountain regions near large cities like Caracas and Valencia. In September 1964, for example, a group of 16 insurgents briefly appeared in a mountain region some 30 miles southeast of Caracas and were apparently responsible for the sabotage of a highway bridge. Some wore beards in the style of rural guerrillas but they identified themselves to villagers as members of the "Manuel Oyón" Detachment: a designation which strongly suggests that they were members of an urban terrorist Tactical Combat Unit (UTC) performing a temporary guerrilla mission.<sup>1</sup>

#### Urban-Rural Terrorism

Venezuela's modern highway system has brought the oil-producing regions of the country and its most important agricultural areas within the range of a few hours' automobile drive from cities like Maracay, Barquisimeto, Caracas, and Barcelona. Urban-based terrorists have thus the opportunity, on which they have often capitalized, to extend their operations beyond suburban areas and to carry out motorized attacks on objectives located as much as 150 road miles or more from major Venezuelan cities.<sup>2</sup>

The rural targets struck by the automobile-borne terrorists have been similar to those previously noted in the section on suburban insurgency.

1. El Nacional, 23 September 1964.
2. Attention should once again be drawn to the fact, previously noted in Chapter 4 of this report, that persons unfamiliar with the motorized rural operations of the urban terrorists are sometimes led to form an exaggerated impression of the strength and ubiquity of the Castro-Communist guerrilla movement in Venezuela. E.g., the May 1964 attack by 15 men on the village of El Real in western Venezuela. It was described in the U.S. press as a "guerrilla action" whereas in reality it was the work of motorized terrorists based in the nearby town of Barinas. New York Times and Washington Post, 4 May 1964; El Universal and El Nacional, 3 May and 4 June 1964.

There have been raids on small villages, sabotage of highway bridges and oil pipelines, and robberies of business establishments and well-to-do farmers. The development of these operations has been assisted by the fact that the rural targets most suitable for terrorist attack are usually located along or in proximity to main highways and feeder roads. Most of the larger oil pipelines, for example, are paralleled by paved roads.

An indication of the mobility and range of some urban-based terrorist operations in rural Venezuela may be seen in the following case examples.<sup>1</sup> On 3 July 1963 a terrorist group of 30 men in the eastern port town of Carúpano sprayed the local Marine garrison with gunfire. At 2:00 A.M. the following morning, the same group invaded a small village about 10 miles outside Carúpano, disarmed the local police, and wrecked the local telegraph office. On 6 July two members of the group were seized after an incendiary attack on the offices of the Creole Petroleum Corporation, a U. S. Standard Oil affiliate, in Maturín. On 7 July other members of the band, by now more than 150 road miles from Carúpano, sabotaged the El Tigre-Barcelona oil pipeline.<sup>2</sup>

Another urban insurgent group of 8-10 men began a venture into rural terrorism by robbing a late-model Opel in the city of Valencia on the night of 17 February 1964. Using this car and a Ford Taunus, the group attempted on the following day to take control of a village on a feeder road some 40 miles southwest of Valencia. The attack failed, and the terrorists fled so hastily that they wrecked both the Opel and the Taunus on a sharp curve. Their next step was to commandeer two vehicles which shortly appeared on the road: a Willys delivery truck and a Valiant. Some of the terrorists were captured by the police while en route back to Valencia; others were picked up in the town of San Juan de los Morros, some 130 road

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1. The place names cited in the case examples appear on the fold-out map of Northern Venezuela appended to Chapter 11 of this report.

2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 336.

miles away. A few days later, Army and police units seized eight more terrorists who were attempting to operate as guerrillas in the mountains surrounding the village which had come under attack. Among the items confiscated from the "guerrillas" were a late-model Valiant and a Chevrolet.<sup>1</sup>

#### Support to Rural Guerrillas

On a few occasions, probably few because of the risks involved, urban terrorist cells in western Venezuelan cities have attempted to aid the rural guerrillas of Falcón and El Charal by launching diversionary attacks on targets located in the rear of government forces engaged in anti-guerrilla operations. In February 1963, for example, terrorists undertook a coordinated sabotage operation against bridges on the three major highways leading to Barquisimeto, the site of a military headquarters which was then supporting a major Army operation against the Falcón guerrillas.<sup>2</sup>

Another type of motorized urban-rural terrorist attack in support of rural guerrillas was employed, apparently for the first time, in November 1964. A unit of eight terrorists, presumably based in Barquisimeto, raided a village in the El Charal mountains located to the rear of Army forces which were then engaged in an anti-guerrilla encirclement operation. As the raid occurred in an area previously "cleared" by the Army, and the identity of the assailants for a time was unknown, the initial effect of the assault was to make it appear that the guerrillas had broken out of the Army's trap and were marauding behind it.<sup>3</sup>

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1. El Universal, 19-27 February 1964.
  2. El Universal, 13 February 1963.
  3. El Universal, 19-21 November 1964.

## Chapter 11

### URBAN AND URBAN-RURAL COUNTERINSURGENCY

Responsibility for law and order maintenance in Venezuela, including defense against Castro-Communist urban and urban-rural insurgency violence, is divided among a variety of government forces and agencies. There are four national security forces: the security or political police (DIGEPOL), of the Ministry of Interior Relations; the criminal investigation police (PTJ) of the Ministry of Justice; the traffic police of the Ministry of Communications; and the National Guard, a paramilitary rural and urban security force under the Ministry of Defense. Each of the twenty States and three Federal Districts into which Venezuela is divided also has its own police force, subdivided into rural and municipal contingents. The Venezuelan Army, Navy (including Marines), and Air Force function as internal security forces in cases of special need.

Available information does not permit full study of the urban and urban-rural counterinsurgency operations of the many Venezuelan security forces nor of the problems of coordination which exist among them. Sufficient data has appeared in public print, however, to permit a description of the counterinsurgency doctrine which has governed the operations of the various forces and also to allow a judgment as to the general performance of police and military forces in urban and urban-rural security missions. The Venezuelan Army's experiences in urban counterinsurgency also call attention to a number of operational problems encountered in this area which may be of interest and susceptible, in part, to R&D solution.

#### Counterinsurgency Doctrine

The Venezuelan Government has consistently maintained throughout the course of the Castro-Communist insurgency violence that a democracy cannot defend itself by means other than those authorized by the written law of Venezuela and by what President Betancourt once described as "the

unwritten but overriding law of respect for human dignity."<sup>1</sup> As this doctrine has been stated not only for political effect, but also as a binding control principle for Venezuelan police and military forces, the result is a basic asymmetry between the actions of the urban and urban-rural insurgents on the one hand, and those of the government on the other. The insurgents operate outside the law and can strike, murder, burn, and terrorize at will; the government must keep within the law and is limited accordingly in the counterinsurgency measures which it can adopt and the means which it can use to execute them.

In the orchestration of its broad counterinsurgency response, for example, the Venezuelan Executive is obliged to observe the constitutional separation of powers between the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of the national government. In practice, this has meant that many captured terrorists and rioters have been released time and again by the civil courts for lack of evidence; others have been given extremely light sentences under the antiquated Venezuelan penal code.<sup>2</sup> The National Congress, jealous of its parliamentary privileges and

1. The Venezuelan Government has affirmed its determination to observe legal and humane restraints in the counterinsurgency fight on many occasions; one of the clearest statements was contained in a private letter from President Betancourt to President Kennedy which commented both on the problem of Right-wing and Castro-Communist insurgency violence in Venezuela. "We are hitting both groups, in earnest and in depth, in conformity with the constitution and the law. Our means are no more expeditious than those in the United States and other countries where the representative form of government prevails. We have laws, courts, and legal procedures that work slowly and not always efficiently. But the measures will become more and more active and will be perfected without violating legal standards. The impatient ones would like us to go beyond the written law — and even beyond the unwritten but overriding law of respect for human dignity. I will not, however, deviate from the course laid down for me by the fundamental law of Venezuela and by my own conscience." Quoted in Betancourt, "The Venezuelan Miracle," The Reporter, 13 August 1964, p. 40.
2. The current Venezuelan penal code was adopted in 1926 and is modeled on the Italian penal code of 1889. It defines many modern types of crime and terrorism so poorly that many captured criminals and insurgents escape punishment altogether or receive only disproportionately light sentences. The need for a new penal code is recognized, but none has yet been enacted into law.

immunities, refused during the years 1960-1963 to discipline or expel Communist and Castroite deputies who openly praised, encouraged, and justified the insurgency violence.<sup>1</sup>

Legal restraint's have also operated to impair the effectiveness of many police and military tactical operations against the Castro-Communist urban and urban-rural insurgents. The campus of the Central University at Caracas, for example, has long been a privileged sanctuary for terrorists and rioters because the government has respected the legal immunity of the university to police or military search and entry.<sup>2</sup> The police have also observed the legal rule which prohibits fingerprinting and photographing of juveniles under 18 years of age, even though the Castro-Communists have made extensive use of juveniles in urban and urban-rural insurgency actions.<sup>3</sup>

The pressure of the insurgency violence has made it necessary for the Venezuelan Government to curtail some basic civil liberties in the interests of the counterinsurgency fight. Even in this area, however, restraint and observance of legal and humanitarian principles have marked official actions. No captured insurgent has been executed; no insurgent hostages have been taken. Torture and other mistreatment of insurgent prisoners have been forbidden. Police have been warned not to fire their weapons against citizens unless there are "grave motives" to justify it.<sup>4</sup> The government has also been unwilling to abridge the constitutional right of citizens to free transit in the national territory, even though this forbearance has assisted Castro-Communist

1. President Betancourt, in a move of questionable constitutionality, finally took matters into his own hands by imprisoning the Communist and Castroite deputies in October 1963.
2. There were occasional instances in 1960-1964 of police trespass into the Central University, but none serious enough to threaten the safety of insurgents hiding out on the university grounds.
3. El Universal, 1 August 1964; Washington Post, 30 June 1964.
4. E.g., the circular to the State police, reproduced in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 119.

terrorists to move with impunity out of the cities of Venezuela on motorized urban-rural insurgency attacks.<sup>1</sup>

Observance of these restraints, and others too numerous to mention, has thus rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for Venezuelan security forces to eliminate the urban and urban-rural insurgency violence altogether, so long as the Castro-Communists themselves are willing to keep up the fight. On the other hand, the Venezuelan Government has gained a strong moral position in the insurgency struggle which probably more than compensates for the restrictions imposed on the operations of its security forces.

#### Police Counterinsurgency

The counterinsurgency doctrine adopted by the Venezuelan Government does not relieve it of responsibility, as sovereign political authority, for maintenance of acceptable standards of law and order in the face of the Castro-Communist attack. In this respect, the government's endeavors have been hampered not only by its self-imposed legal and humanitarian restraints but by serious operational deficiencies in many of its police forces.

The police problem in Venezuela has its origins in the country's long history of subjection to dictatorships and in the turmoil which accompanied the overthrow of its most recent dictator, Pérez Jiménez, in January 1958. As agents of dictatorial regimes, the Venezuelan police gained an unsavory reputation which still impedes civilian-police cooperation in democratic Venezuela.<sup>2</sup>

1. Except in rural guerrilla zones, highway surveillance by government security forces in Venezuela is limited to occasional road checks of vehicles, registration papers, personal identity papers, etc. There is no indication that these measures have significantly impeded civilian, or insurgent, transit through the country.
2. "In reality, the police are the principal institution at the service of all that man has created. . . and the citizenry should repose great faith in them. But the reality is otherwise: the Venezuelan citizen is not the friend of the police; nor do the police of our country consider themselves the servants of the people." La Republica, 6 June 1964; also, for similar comments, El Universal, 29 July 1962 and 6 April 1964.

In 1958 the popular fury against the Pérez Jiménez regime was so great that the existing national police force was completely disbanded, and the country was left for a time to depend upon State and Federal District police, the National Guard, and civilian vigilantes.

To replace the former national police, three entirely new police forces were created in 1958: the security police (DIGEPOL), the criminal investigative police (PTJ), and the traffic police. All three forces are poorly paid, poorly trained, and have difficulty in attracting honest and competent men.<sup>1</sup> There is also friction between the DIGEPOL and the PTJ which impedes mutual cooperation and on a few occasions has almost led to open violence.<sup>2</sup>

The police situation is also complicated by the existence of separate forces in each of the twenty Venezuelan States and three Federal Districts. Most of these forces are far below the DIGEPOL and the PTJ in quality of personnel; there are also formidable problems of securing coordination and cooperation among the individual forces. In Caracas, which has borne the brunt of the Castro-Communist insurgency violence, there are not less than seven security forces charged with maintenance of law and order: the DIGEPOL, the PTJ, the traffic police, the National Guard, the police of the Federal District of Venezuela (western Caracas), and the police of Miranda State (eastern Caracas).

Equipment is still another area in which the Venezuelan police forces, until a very recent period, have been seriously deficient. In Caracas, where Castro-Communist terrorists for years have used automobiles as their principal means of attack and getaway, the police were not equipped with radio patrol cars or an adequate radio communications network until early 1963.<sup>3</sup> Police forces in other major cities have had to wait even longer for modern urban counterinsurgency equipment. In Barquisimeto (200,000), the third largest city in Venezuela, the municipal police received their first radio patrol cars and radio communications equipment in late 1963, along with what may have been their first adequate supply of modern rifles, submachine guns, and

1. Special Operations Research Office (SORO), U.S. Army Area Handbook for Venezuela, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964, pp. 511-512; also, El Nacional, 7 May and 11 June 1964.
2. E.g., La Esfera, 28 April 1964.
3. El Universal, 3 and 28 April 1963; El Nacional, 10 April 1963.

tear gas.<sup>1</sup> Police in the important seaport city of Puerto Cabello (50,000) were given their first radio patrol cars as of May 1964 but still lacked, as of that date, a radio communications link between central police headquarters and precinct stations.<sup>2</sup>

The equipment of the rural police forces in the Venezuelan States and Federal Districts is probably even more inadequate and in worse repair than that of the municipal police. In April 1963, for example, the Ministry of Interior Relations informed all State Governors that the weapons of their police forces were "in a wretched state of maintenance."<sup>3</sup> Another message of October 1963 ordered the Governors, as a matter of urgency, to find out how many police were actually on duty in their States and to determine outstanding needs with respect to uniforms, arms, ammunition, vehicles, and radio equipment.<sup>4</sup> Early in 1964, police in two of the more populous Venezuelan States were equipped, for the first time, with radio communication sets and a few radio patrol cars.<sup>5</sup>

With new equipment, the reorganization of some police forces, and the introduction of Chilean and U. S. police missions, the Venezuelan Government has brought gradual improvement in the urban and urban-rural counter-insurgency capabilities of its various national and regional police organizations. It is also noteworthy that, in conjunction with these efforts, the Venezuelan Government has taken several actions which have helped to compensate for police deficiencies and encourage better police-civilian relations. These are related to the following police problem areas:

1. El Universal, 17 November 1963.
2. El Universal, 21 May 1964.
3. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 113.
4. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 124-125.
5. La República, 2 March and 22 May 1964.

1. Police deficiencies. Governments engaged in an insurgency struggle often attempt to hide the operational deficiencies of their police forces, even though these shortcomings are perfectly well-known to the generality of citizens and to the insurgents. The Venezuelan authorities have placed no bar to the full public airing of police deficiencies; instead, they have welcomed such discussions as a means of inducing public opinion to support larger expenditures on the various police forces.<sup>1</sup>

2. Police brutality. The poor caliber of personnel in many of the Venezuelan police forces has inevitably led to occasional cases of actual and alleged police brutality towards captured insurgents. Rather than hide such cases, the Venezuelan authorities have assisted full public investigation and punished guilty police agents.<sup>2</sup>

3. Police counterinsurgency failures. Venezuelan citizens, no less than citizens of other nations engaged in an insurgency struggle, have sometimes been inclined to take an alarmist view of police failures to prevent acts of Castro-Communist urban and urban-rural terrorism. The Venezuelan Government has met this problem by frankly telling its citizens, as a "universal truth," that there is no possibility of a completely effective police defense against terrorist action.<sup>3</sup> It has reminded them that the French police, "one of the best police forces in the world," could not prevent more

1. E.g., the October 1963 government circular ordering State Governors in Venezuela to investigate deficiencies in their police forces and, if necessary, to seek additional funds from the State Legislative Assemblies for police use. If the Assemblies were reluctant to grant more money, the Governors were urged to use propaganda and to stir "pressure groups" into demanding favorable Assembly action. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 124-125.
2. "The Government repudiates all kinds of [police] abuses. The Government will investigate any kind of abuse which may be committed by agents entrusted with police authority and is ready to see that these abuses are punished." Statement of the Venezuelan Minister of Interior before a committee of the National Congress, September 1962, reproduced in the Ministry's Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 72.
3. Statement in a government communique reproduced in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 302-305.

than 1,000 acts of OAS terrorism in metropolitan France during a single year. It has also asserted that the terrorist violence in Venezuela cannot be ended by government action alone but only by the concerted action of all Venezuelan citizens.<sup>1</sup>

4. Police-civilian relations. From late 1963 onwards the Venezuelan authorities, somewhat belatedly, have taken significant steps to correct perhaps the most serious of all police counterinsurgency problems: the poor and sometimes antagonistic relations between Venezuelan police forces and the civilian population. Public commemorative services have been held for policemen murdered by the insurgents, and newspapers encouraged to print photographs of their bereaved families, as a means of building up a "human" image of police agents. Advertisements inserted in newspapers have called attention to police successes in counterinsurgency and anti-criminal operations, in an effort to build up public confidence in the police. In Caracas, the telephone number "80" was established as an emergency number which any citizen could call and be sure of receiving prompt police assistance.<sup>2</sup>

Another important police innovation at Caracas was the institution in November 1964 of a program resembling military police Civic Action in poorer sections of the city which have often served as terrorist and criminal hideouts. The program includes police provision of improved sanitary facilities in the hillside squatter shanty towns, or ranchos, which house a large part of the Caracas population; it also includes free police transportation of sick and needy persons to government medical and health centers. The purpose of the

1. "I would not be sincere if I guaranteed to you that there are not going to be more terrorist actions. Terrorism is not easy to prevent. In France, where one of the best police forces in the world is operating, there were more than a thousand terrorist actions during 1961 . . . Here in Venezuela we do not have a police as efficient as the French, but each day we are taking another step to make our police more efficient. . . . But the struggle against terrorism is not only the task of the Government. It is, and it must be, the function of all citizens." Speech of President Betancourt to the Venezuelan people, reproduced in El Universal, 8 October 1963.
2. The average daily number of citizen calls to the number "80" in Caracas rose from 300 in late 1963 to more than 2,300 by April 1964. El Universal and La República, 23 April 1964.

program, according to the Commandant of Federal District Police, is to see to it that "the police have a friend in the man who lives on the hillside, and conversely that the same citizen will have a great friend in the policeman."<sup>1</sup>

#### Military Counterinsurgency

The operational deficiencies of its police forces have made it necessary for the Venezuelan Government to rely heavily upon its military forces for assistance in countering major outbreaks of Castro-Communist urban and urban-rural insurgency violence. The forces available for the purpose are the National Guard (9,000), Army (16,000), Navy (5,000), and Air Force (3,000). Members of the unorganized military reserves were also called up for duty during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 and the final weeks before the December 1963 elections.<sup>2</sup>

The National Guard is a well-trained, well-paid, volunteer para-military force. Its mission is entirely that of internal security. It operates in both urban and rural areas and has an air-transportable unit which can move rapidly to any part of the country in the event of natural disaster or major disturbance of the public order.

The Guard is highly respected in Venezuela because of the high caliber of its personnel and its efficient performance in a multitude of internal security missions and public service functions. It serves as a land frontier and coast guard, operates the National Forest Service, provides guards for some industrial and penal institutions, patrols mines and national parks, and assists in highway supervision. In many remote rural areas, it constitutes the only effective police force and performs a Civic Action function by providing medical, dental, and other social services to isolated peasant families and

1. El Universal, 3 and 14 November 1964.

2. SORO, U. S. Army Area Handbook for Venezuela, 1964, p. 542.

communities.<sup>1</sup> The Guard also maintains a total of 94 small literacy schools in urban and rural areas, which give free instruction to adults and children.<sup>2</sup>

If given more personnel, the National Guard could probably function as a totally effective paramilitary internal security force in both urban and rural areas because of its volunteer character, past record of efficient performance, emphasis on urban and rural Civic Action, and the excellent reputation which it has gained within Venezuela. At present, however, the 9,000 Guardsmen are spread so thinly over the country, and are routinely engaged in so many security and Civic Action missions, that the Guard has been unable to provide all the counterinsurgency support required by Venezuelan police forces. This circumstance has made it necessary for the authorities to rely heavily on the Army, and to a lesser extent on Navy Marines, in coping with major outbreaks of urban insurgency violence, especially in the Caracas area.<sup>3</sup>

The Venezuelan Army has performed thus far with success in the urban counterinsurgency mission, in the sense that each strong show of Army force in Caracas and other cities has been sufficient to discourage, put down, or counter outbreaks of Castro-Communist urban insurgency violence. But there appear to be a number of gaps in the Army's preparedness for urban counterinsurgency which, if remedied, might significantly improve its

1. La República, 3 August 1964.
2. El Universal, 13 September 1964.
3. Occasions on which Venezuelan military forces other than the National Guard have been called upon for counterinsurgency duty in Caracas include the riots of October and November 1960, the visit of President Kennedy to the city in December 1961, the street violence and sniper violence of January 1962 and January 1963, and a period of several weeks' continuous patrol duty prior to the December 1963 elections.

capabilities in this field. These gaps are briefly noted below, together with suggestions as to their possible relevance to counter-insurgency programs for Venezuela and for Latin America generally.<sup>1</sup>

#### Military Urban Counterinsurgency Problems

1. Training and tactics. The Venezuelan Army has been called upon to deal with a wide spectrum of Castro-Communist insurgency actions in Caracas: riots, acts of sabotage, arson, robbery, and murder by small terrorist units, acts of street violence by dispersed "shock brigades," and concealed sniper fire. Only one of these actions, the riot, was a traditional form of urban insurgency in Venezuela. Small-unit terrorism was not practiced before 1959, when it was introduced at Caracas by insurgent supporters of the exiled Venezuelan dictator, Pérez Jiménez.<sup>2</sup> Concealed sniper fire and "shock brigade" actions appear to be entirely Castro-Communist insurgent innovations, employed for the first time in 1961-1962.

Apart from the riot, therefore, the Venezuelan Army initially confronted types of urban insurgency violence at Caracas that were unfamiliar to it and, especially in the case of concealed sniper fire, exposed its personnel to unprecedented danger. The Army had also to consider that the bulk of the soldiers available for the urban counterinsurgency mission were illiterate

1. No reference is made in the next section of this chapter to problems encountered in operations against Castro-Communist urban-rural insurgents because, as indicated earlier in this chapter, Venezuelan police forces have not possessed until recently the most elemental types of equipment (e.g., radio communications, radio patrol cars) needed to restrain this type of insurgency activity. It is possible that as this equipment is introduced, the problem of urban-rural insurgency will decline. Also the Venezuelan Government, in its anxiety to maintain constitutional freedoms including the right of free transit, would probably be averse to highway control measures (e.g., frequent roadblocks, searches of vehicles) which might impede urban-rural insurgent actions but also create significant delays and interference to ordinary civilian traffic.
2. Rómulo Betancourt, Tres años de gobierno democrático, Vol. 1, p. 120.

or semi-literate conscripts, drawn from poor peasant and laboring families, and inferior in quality to Castro-Communist insurgents recruited mainly from university and secondary school students and graduates.<sup>1</sup> The result seems to have been that early Army counterinsurgency actions in Caracas, although generally effective, were hampered by uncertainty as to the proper tactics to employ against snipers, terrorists, and "shock brigades." Two high-ranking military officers, for example, publicly acknowledged in 1962 that the Army found it far more difficult to find an effective response to urban insurgents than to rural guerrillas, since in Caracas the insurgents could shoot from apartment houses, attack under cover of darkness, and lose themselves in a protective screen of pedestrians. The Army meanwhile had to hold its fire for fear of causing injury to the lives and property of innocent civilians.<sup>2</sup>

The Venezuelan Army has gradually improved its urban counterinsurgency tactics by profiting from the lessons learned in successive operations against the Castro-Communist snipers, terrorists, and "shock brigades."<sup>3</sup> Much valuable time could probably have been saved, however, and the urban insurgents more effectively curtailed, if the Army had been adequately prepared from the outset to cope with the novel insurgency problems that it encountered in Caracas.

1. Rodolfo José Cárdenas, La insurrección popular en Venezuela, 1961, pp. 55-56.
2. Statement of the Venezuelan Minister of Defense, as reported in El Universal, 28 March 1962; statement of a high-ranking Army officer, as reported in El Nacional, 19 September 1962.
3. A notable improvement in military urban counterinsurgency tactics was evident at Caracas in the final weeks of 1963, when Army, Navy, and National Guard units continuously patrolled the streets in order to head off the Castro-Communist threat to prevent or disrupt the December elections. A newspaper reported that the military was strategically dispersed throughout the city in small and highly mobile detachments. Military personnel on duty in the detachments were said to have been specially trained in urban counterinsurgency tactics, including instruction in riot control and combat against "street guerrillas." El Universal, 4 October 1963.

On the basis of the Venezuelan Army's urban counterinsurgency experience, therefore, it may be appropriate to raise the following questions with respect to the adequacy of current military counterinsurgency programs not only in Venezuela, but in Latin America generally:

a. Whether sufficient study has been undertaken of the readiness, particularly as regards to training and tactics, of Latin American military forces to meet urban insurgency techniques of the varied types employed in Caracas.

b. Whether sufficient attention is currently given in training programs for Latin American military forces as to appropriate tactics for use in urban anti-terrorist, anti-sniper, and anti-"shock brigade" operations, in addition to the traditional emphasis on military familiarization with techniques of urban riot control.

A more detailed study of the Venezuelan Army's urban counterinsurgency operations than can be undertaken in this report might also be of value to military counterinsurgency planners in determining:

a. In what areas steps could be taken to improve current Venezuelan Army urban counterinsurgency tactics and training programs.

b. Whether lessons could be learned from further study of the Venezuelan Army's experience in urban counterinsurgency that would be of value in updating and improving the content of military training programs for other Latin American military forces.

2. Military-police cooperation. It is often taken for granted that harmonious relationships will automatically exist between military forces and police forces engaged in joint urban counterinsurgency endeavors. During the early years of the Castro-Communist insurgency in Venezuela, however, there were several occasions on which rioters and terrorists in Caracas created confusion and dissension among counterinsurgency forces by refraining from attacks on military and directing their attacks only on police.<sup>1</sup>

1. Rodolfo José Cárdenas, La insurrección popular en Venezuela, 1961, p. 56.

by forcing the police out of a position they were holding.<sup>1</sup>

No significant instance of open military-police friction in Caracas has been reported by the Venezuelan press in recent years; but it is questionable whether, in view of former frictions, the Army or the police have yet undertaken sufficient steps to assure full cooperation between their forces in urban counterinsurgency operations. The Venezuelan experience may thus point to the need for a fuller understanding and study of military-police relationships not only in Venezuela, but elsewhere in Latin America, as a guide to efforts which may be needed to improve operational coordination between indigenous military and police forces.

3. Military equipment. Available data on Venezuelan military urban counterinsurgency operations does not indicate that Army personnel lacked adequate individual equipment, weaponry, communications equipment, or riot-control equipment.<sup>2</sup> A study of vehicular equipment, however, indicates a number of operational problems of possible military interest. For example, on many occasions when Castro-Communist snipers were active in Caracas, or the threat of sniper action was present, Army and other military units moved through the streets in jeeps, open personnel carriers, and canvas top trucks that were highly vulnerable to sniper attack.<sup>3</sup> On many occasions also, military vehicles were disabled or their movements impeded by tacks and other sharp objects which insurgent "shock brigades" placed in the streets.<sup>4</sup> Still another

1. This incident is referred to in a Venezuelan Communist Party information bulletin quoted in El Universal, 25 January 1961.
2. A possible exception is body armor, which does not appear to have been used by military urban counterinsurgency forces, and which could have provided some protection against sniper attack.
3. Snipers in Caracas seldom fired on military vehicles, but this was due entirely to lack of initiative, since there were many occasions on which vehicles could have been fired on with relative impunity.
4. Drivers of military and police vehicles had to place improvised brushes of tree branches on front bumpers in an effort to avoid disabling punctures.

problem encountered by mobile military units was the poor night lighting in many districts of Caracas, particularly the hillside slum areas in which snipers were sometimes posted.

These considerations suggest that it might be useful to study types of vehicles currently available to the Venezuelan military, and to the Latin American military generally, for the performance of urban counterinsurgency missions. The study might show a need for the following:

a. Development of an urban counterinsurgency vehicle equipped with puncture-proof tires and sufficient armor to protect against sniper, Molotov cocktail, and grenade attack.

b. Provision of light and detachable armor panels for jeeps, open personnel carriers, and other normally unarmored military vehicles.

c. Review of the TOE's of Army and Army engineer units, particularly those stationed in large Venezuelan cities, in order to determine whether additional types of vehicles -- e.g., searchlight trucks, tow trucks -- might usefully be held by these units in anticipation of urban counterinsurgency requirements.

4. Military installation security. In Caracas, the many high-rise buildings in the city, as also the mountain heights overlooking many populated districts, have enabled snipers to fire into a number of military installations and garrison compounds.<sup>1</sup> Some of the most important military and police garrisons in the city are also dependent on one or two exit roads which are vulnerable to insurgent fire from nearby heights and high-rise dwellings.<sup>2</sup>

These considerations suggest that the following steps might be taken to improve the security of urban military

1. E.g., the case of the sergeant shot dead by a sniper-shot into the interior of the Urdaneta Barracks in Caracas. El Universal, 25 January 1963.
2. E.g., the main police headquarters and garrison in Caracas is located in an isolated ravine and communicates over only one road with the remainder of the city. El Universal, 7 October 1962.

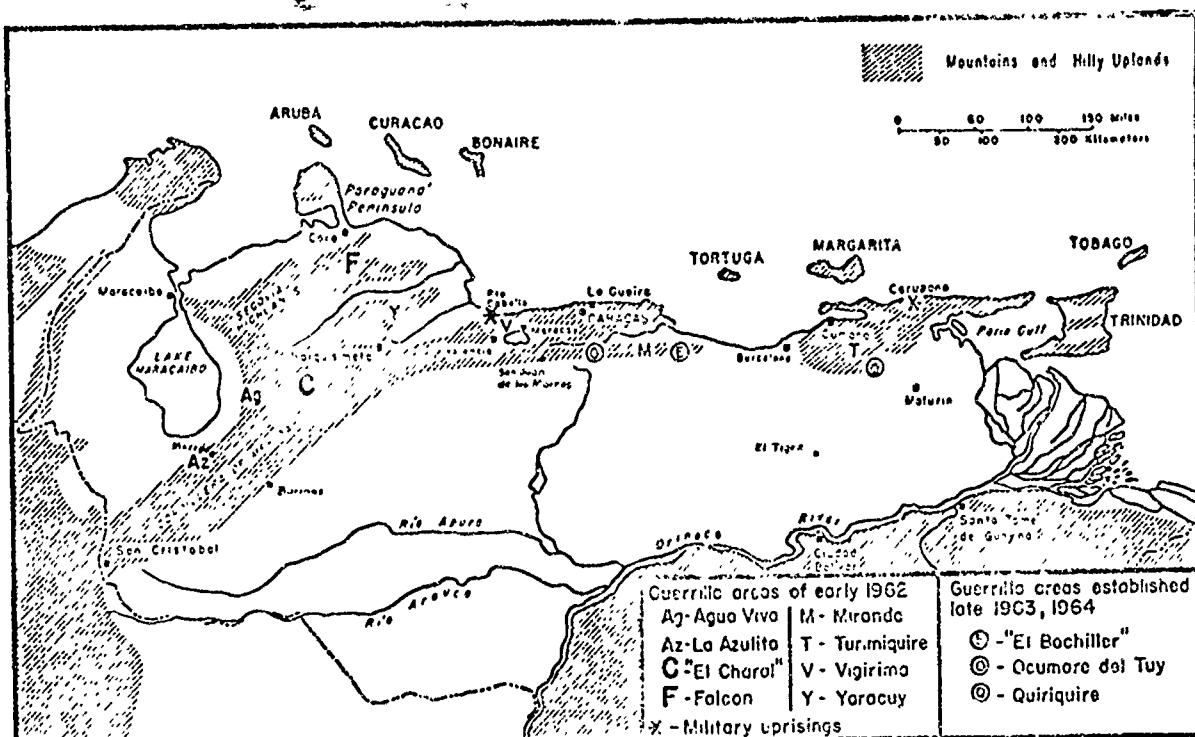
installations in Caracas and other cities of Latin America:

a. Development of a manual on military installation security that would assist base commanders in urban areas to identify points of installation vulnerability, and suggest methods (e.g., bulletproof screens) of reducing or eliminating existing security hazards.

b. Development of a manual on zoning regulations for urban areas contiguous to military installations, so as to prevent residential or commercial construction that could be used by snipers in attacks on military installations.

5. Military Urban Civic Action. The Venezuelan Army has thus far limited its Civic Action programs entirely to rural areas of the country, even though Caracas and other cities have been important centers of insurgency violence, and the Army has often been called upon to participate in urban counterinsurgency operations. Opportunities for Army Civic Action abound in the cities of Venezuela, particularly in the shanty towns which house a large proportion of the urban populations.

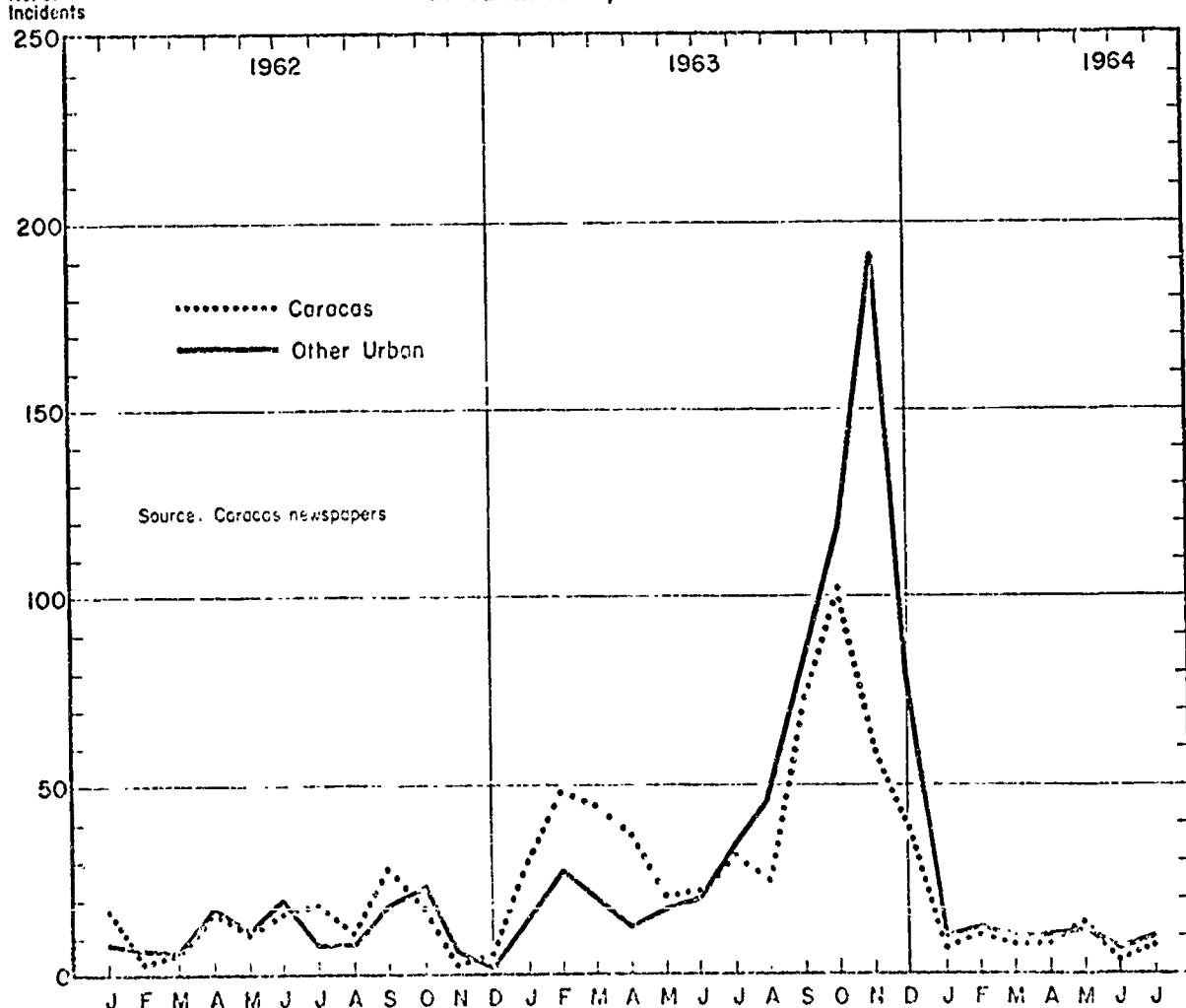
These considerations suggest that the Venezuelan Army might usefully expand its current Civic Action endeavor to include major cities of the country, as a means of significantly improving its urban counterinsurgency response. Such programs could be linked to current National Guard and Caracas police Civic Action endeavors, for the further purpose of improving operational coordination between Army, National Guard, and police in the urban counterinsurgency mission.



MAP C. Castro-Communist Areas in Venezuela, 1962-1964

URBAN AND URBAN-BASED TERRORISM AND SABOTAGE  
IN VENEZUELA, 1962-1964

**CHART D**



**PART IV - GUERRILLA AND ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS**

## Chapter 12

### THE FALCÓN GUERRILLAS

The Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela have attempted on various occasions in 1962 and again in 1964 to launch rural guerrilla movements in eleven different regions of the country. Nine of these ventures collapsed in short order because of insurgent failures to gain the support of rural populations and inability to withstand initial military or police attack. In the Falcón and El Charal mountains of western Venezuela, however, the guerrilla experience has been different. In both regions, Castro-Communist insurgents have gained some support among local mountain populations and have held out since early 1962 against repeated and sometimes large-scale military attacks. In late Summer and Autumn 1964, the guerrillas in these two regions appeared stronger, and were certainly more aggressive, than at any previous period in their history.<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of this report will be devoted to a detailed study of guerrilla and anti-guerrilla operations during the period 1962-1964 in the Falcón and El Charal regions. The inquiry is divided into three parts. This chapter, and the one following, will identify the special geographic and local population factors that have assisted the guerrillas to remain in Falcón and El Charal since early 1962, the character of guerrilla personnel, and the patterns of guerrilla operations. A third chapter will describe the anti-guerrilla strategy of the Venezuelan Army and identify some of the operational problems which thus far have impeded the military's efforts to eliminate guerrillas in the two regions. The chapter will also suggest reasons why, despite nearly three years of more or less continuous operation, the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas have never acquired a politico-military importance in Venezuela in any way comparable to that of Castro's guerrillas in the Cuban Sierra Maestra.

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1. The locations of the eleven areas of attempted guerrilla operation in Venezuela are indicated in the fold-out map appended to the previous chapter. The general history of the Castro-Communist guerrilla movement, including the many guerrilla failures, is described in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

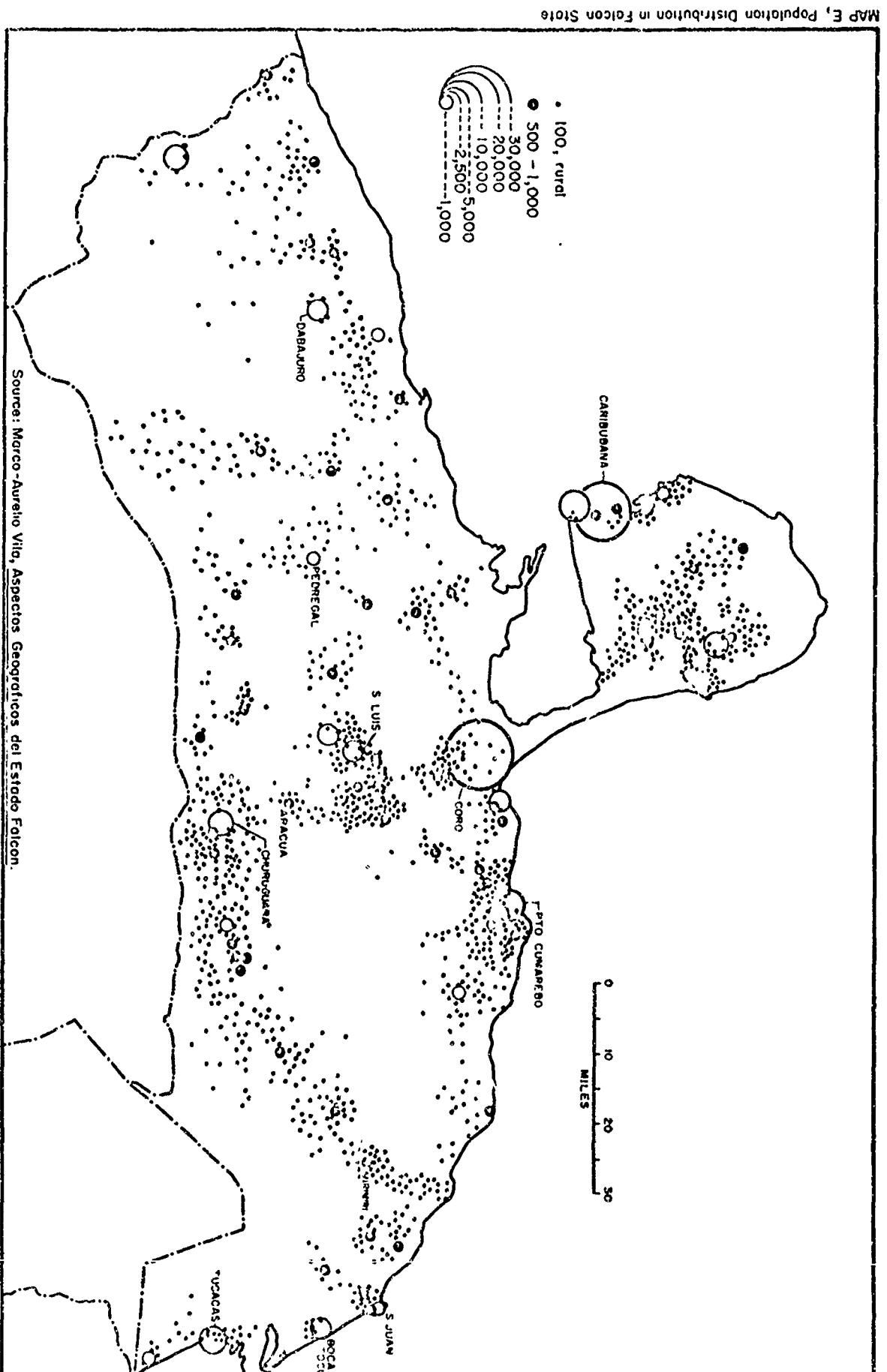
### The Falcón Guerrilla Base Area

The State of Falcón, which includes a sector of the Venezuelan mainland and the protruding fist of the Paraguana Peninsula, is situated on the northwest coast of Venezuela.<sup>1</sup> It is about twice the area of New Jersey but had a population of only 340,450 as of the 1961 census. Coro (population: 45,368) is the State capital and largest city.

Most of the land surface of Falcón is extremely dry and is used for the grazing of goats and cattle. In the center of the State, however, and east of the Coro-Churuguara highway, two low-lying mountain regions receive a good annual rainfall and are the scene of intensive agricultural activity. These are the Sierra de Coro (3,000-5,000 feet), extending eastward from the villages of Curimagua (population: 550) and San Luis (population: 1,266), and the Sierra de Churuguara (3,000 feet), extending eastward from Churuguara (population: 5,000). Low hills separate the two mountain ranges in the west; to the east, there is a broad depression which, as indicated in Map E on the following page, is virtually devoid of population.

The areas occupied by the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara are not large; and the highway-trail pattern is such that anti-guerrilla forces can easily encircle the Sierra de Coro and traverse the Sierra de Churuguara.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Castro-Communist guerrillas have managed to operate for three years in both sierras despite repeated Army attacks and probing operations. That they have done so is partially attributable to three local climate and terrain factors:

1. See the fold-out orientation map of the Falcón guerrilla area appended to this chapter.
2. The Coro-Morón highway is paved throughout. Paving of the highway from Coro past Churuguara was completed early in 1962 about the time of the first Falcón guerrilla episodes. All other thick-line roads shown on the orientation map are gravelled; the gravel road from Churuguara to Santa Cruz de Bucaral was extended to La Taza in 1963 or 1964.



1. Climate. The Sierras de Coro and Churuguara are regions of frequent rainfall, drizzle, mist, and fog. These conditions often make Army penetration into the mountains difficult because of mud, swamps, and restricted visibility. They have also given rise in many areas to thick vegetation and to dense mats of cloud forest on mountain slopes and in mountain basins.<sup>1</sup>

2. Terrain. The mountains of Falcón, particularly in the areas used by guerrillas for refuge and base camps, are an extremely complex tangle of intersecting ridges, cliffs, and gorges. In the Sierra de San Luis, troops have sometimes been obliged to use scaling ropes in order to penetrate into some areas of suspected guerrilla presence.<sup>2</sup>

3. Caverns. Both the Sierra de Coro and the Sierra de Churuguara are of limestone formation and are honeycombed with caves and caverns, many of which have never been mapped and only a few of which have ever been explored.<sup>3</sup> Guerrillas are known to have hidden out in caverns near La Taza in the Sierra de Churuguara and may also have used the caves known to exist near Santa Cruz de Bucaral (Population: 1,871) and Churuguara.<sup>4</sup> President Betancourt once referred to the "inaccessible caverns" utilized as refuge areas by guerrillas in the Sierra de Coro.<sup>5</sup>

1. Two photographs of the dense forests of the Falcón mountains were published in Life, 13 December 1963, p. 44.
2. El Nacional, 6 April 1963.
3. Pablo Villa, Geografía de Venezuela: El territorio nacional y su ambiente físico, Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1960. p. 87.
4. El Nacional, 12 February 1963; also Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales (Caracas), No. 81, 1954, pp. 137-140.
5. Rómulo Betancourt, "The Venezuelan Miracle," The Reporter, 15 August 1964, p. 40.

### Local Population Factors

The population in the Falcón guerrilla zones consists mainly of farm families which own and operate small, but highly productive, plots of land. In politics, they are overwhelmingly on the side of the Acción Democrática Party (AD) of Presidents Rómulo Betancourt and Raúl Leoni. In the elections of December 1958, for example, they gave AD congressional candidates a total of 11,681 votes, as contrasted with 3,015 votes for the Unión Republicana Democrática Party (URD), and only 300 votes for Communist Party candidates.<sup>1</sup> In the elections of December 1963, the AD majority in the Falcón guerrilla zones fell off, but the party still received 60 per cent or better of all votes cast.<sup>2</sup>

The Falcón mountaineers have also a practical reason for their allegiance to the AD party. In recent years, they have derived many tangible local benefits from the Betancourt and Leoni administrations, including agrarian reform, agrarian credits, road construction, aqueduct construction, improved educational facilities, and rural electrification.<sup>3</sup>

At first glance, therefore, the populations of the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara would seem no more likely to shelter and assist Castro-Communist guerrillas than the rural populations which have opposed them in other parts of Venezuela. But the Falcón mountaineers are an unusual group,

1. It is sometimes alleged, incorrectly, that the first Falcón guerrilla bands were established near the only mountain village, Cabure in the Sierra de Coro, which gave the Communists a majority in the Venezuelan election of December 1958. The actual Cabure tally in the 1958 congressional balloting, which provides the truest indication of relative Party strength, was 82 votes for the Communists, 410 for AD, and 476 for URD. In Falcón, as elsewhere, the URD is infiltrated by fellow-travelers, but scarcely in sufficient number to give the Communists anything like a majority or near-majority in the 1958 elections. Venezuela, Consejo Supremo Electoral, Resultado de las votaciones efectuadas el 7 de diciembre de 1958, p. Falcón-20.
2. El Nacional, 14 December 1963.
3. El Universal, 3 October 1960, 30 April 1962, 10 July 1963, 13, 14, 30 April 1964; El Nacional, 24 September 1963; Venezuela, Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. I-122, I-337, II-235, II-236.

even in the eyes of their countrymen. They are extremely close-knit, for many families have tilled the same lands for generations and have inter-married to such an extent that it is not uncommon for one mountaineer to have hundreds of blood relatives and friends scattered through the villages of one or both sierras.<sup>1</sup> They are also a people who were involved in many insurrections against the dictators who ruled Venezuela in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Out of this experience came a local custom of aiding relatives and friends who for any reason rise in rebellion against an incumbent government.<sup>2</sup>

The Castro-Communist guerrillas in Falcón were fortunate to possess, at the start of their operations in early 1962, two leaders with extensive family connections in the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara. These men established the first firm guerrilla footholds in Falcón. They did so not only on the strength of their personal links with the mountaineers but also, as will later be seen, by avoiding a premature commitment to insurgency violence which led other Castro-Communist guerrilla bands in the Falcón mountains to early disaster.

#### Guerrilla Personnel

The guerrilla leader with the most influential family connections in the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara was Domingo Urbina. He was not born or raised in the mountains, but belonged to an influential family which for centuries has been prominent in Falcón politics and commerce. The Urbinas are especially well represented in Coro, around Curimagua where they have held lands since at least the 18th century, and in Churuguara.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Universal, 18 August 1964.
2. El Universal, 6 February 1963. The reluctance of the Falcón mountaineers to betray the guerrillas is indicated by the case of two local farmers who admitted freely to newspapermen that they had seen and talked to guerrillas near Cabure in the Sierra de Coro but refused to say what the conversation was about. When pressed for details, one of the farmers replied: "It is much better to maintain silence, not because we are afraid, not because we run any risk, but, simply, because we are not policemen." El Universal, 28 August 1964.
3. At the time Domingo Urbina was operating as a guerrilla in the Falcón hills, another Urbina was head of the security police (DIGEPOL) in Coro, another head of the Falcón State electricity administration, and another a merchant in Churuguara who was ultimately arrested on charges of sending food to the guerrillas. El Universal, 7 August 1963; El Nacional, 17 December 1963 and 8 August 1964.

Domingo Urbina was also the nephew of Rafael Simón Urbina (1897-1950), a Falcón caudillo (i.e., local chieftain) who led three unsuccessful insurrections during the 1920's and 1930's and escaped government capture on each occasion because of the shelter given him by the Falcón mountaineers.<sup>1</sup> The two Urbinas acquired joint notoriety in 1950 when, with the aid of confederates drawn from families in the Sierra de Churuguara, they carried out the kidnap-assassination in Caracas of Col. Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, then the head of a military junta ruling Venezuela.<sup>2</sup> Rafael Simón Urbina was mortally wounded by the police, but Domingo Urbina stood trial and was sentenced to a long prison term. He escaped from prison in October 1961, enrolled himself in the Castro-Communist insurgent ranks, and made his way secretly to the Sierra de Churuguara.<sup>3</sup>

The second guerrilla leader with extensive family ties in the Falcón mountains was Douglas Bravo, a one-time law student. He was born about 1931 at Cabure in the Sierra de Coro, joined the Venezuelan Communist Party as a youth, and was elevated in 1959 to its Central Committee. The Bravo clan is spread all over the Sierra de Coro, particularly in such places as Cabure, Pueblo Nuevo, La Cruz de Taratara, and Arauca.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Rafael Simón Urbina, Victoria, dolor y tragedia, 2nd ed., Ciudad Trujillo (Dominican Republic): Casa Editora, 1946, passim.
  2. It has often been alleged, but never proven, that the kidnapping of Delgado Chalbaud by the two Urbinas was instigated by the dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1950-1958).
  3. El Universal, 23 October 1961 and 25 February 1962. Biographical data on Domingo Urbina and additional data on the Urbina family influence in Falcón is contained in the trial proceedings for the murderers of Delgado Chalbaud. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Sumario del juicio segundo a las personas indiciadas de haber cometido el asesinato del Coronel Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, Caracas, 1951.
  4. El Universal, 6 February 1963; El Nacional, 3 March 1964; also, for biographical data on Douglas Bravo, an article on the Falcón guerrillas which appeared in Hoy (Havana), 1 September 1963.

The family connections of Domingo Urbina and Douglas Bravo were thus an important, and possibly indispensable, means whereby the Castro-Communist guerrillas established their first foothold in the Falcón mountains. Later, as local recruits were drawn into the insurgent ranks, the personal links between the guerrillas and the mountaineers were strengthened and expanded. For example, a government circular of November 1964, placing prices on the heads of the 16 most wanted guerrillas, lists at least eight besides Douglas Bravo who are of Falcón origin:

<u>Guerrilla</u>	<u>Price in</u>	<u>Place of Origin</u>
Douglas Bravo	\$6,600	Cabure, Falcón State
Baudilio Loyo	\$5,500	Falcón
Alejandro Mariño	\$4,000	Unknown
Elias Manuitt Camero	\$4,000	Unknown
Salvador Iturbe Reyes	\$4,000	La Vela de Coro, Falcón
Leonardo "the Sociologist"	\$3,000	Unknown
Alcides Hurtado	\$3,000	Unknown
Julio Chirinos	\$3,000	Falcón
Carlos Pirela	\$3,000	Unknown
Argenis González Bravo	\$3,000	Falcón; said to be cousin of Douglas Bravo
Alirio Chirinos	\$3,000	Falcón
Rider Colina	\$3,000	Falcón
Negro Bravo	\$3,000	Falcón; said to be brother of Douglas Bravo
Evaristo González	\$3,000	Unknown
Hipólito Acosta	\$3,000	Curimagua, Falcón
Tulio Martínez Delgado	\$3,000	Unknown <sup>1</sup>

In addition to full-time Falcón guerrilla recruits, such as the eight men whose names are cited above, the Castro-Communists have enrolled other mountaineers as part-time or auxiliary guerrillas. These normally remain on their farms or in the mountain villages unless called upon for insurgency duty.<sup>2</sup>

1. El Nacional, 12 November 1964.

2. The arrest of some 34 part-time guerrillas is reported in El Universal, 27 December 1964.

Once assured of a foothold among the mountaineers, Bravo and Urbina were also in a position to bring in guerrilla recruits from other parts of Venezuela who, under different circumstances, might have found it difficult to survive among the clannish populations of the Falcón sierras. One of the earliest and most important additions was Elias Manuitt Camero, an Army captain who deserted in May 1962 from the San Cristóbal garrison in the Venezuelan Andes. Other recruits have come from Caracas, including a Negro woman in her late 30's who has been used for "social work" among descendants of Negro slaves in the Sierra de Coro.<sup>1</sup>

The Falcón guerrillas also appear to have been well equipped at most stages in their career with money sent into the mountains by Castro-Communist insurgents in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities.<sup>2</sup> They have used this money to purchase food from the mountaineers, reportedly at better than market prices, and by this means have drawn hundreds of the local people into voluntary and therefore criminal compliance with their insurgency.

#### Guerrilla Operations

Phase I. Initial Falcón guerrilla operations are of interest as illustrating the outcome of two different approaches to rural guerrilla war simultaneously employed in the area by the Castro-Communists during the early months of 1962. One approach led to early disasters; the other, under the management of Douglas Bravo and Domingo Urbina, created the conditions for prolonged guerrilla survival.

The first overt Castro-Communist guerrilla actions in Falcón were the product of an ambitious insurgent plan for "rapid victory" in Venezuela by late 1962 through a combination of urban insurgency, rural guerrilla war, and revolt by military garrisons won over to the Castro-Communist cause. As part

1. Hoy (Havana), 1 September 1963.

2. E.g., El Universal, 22 February 1962, 29 October 1964.

of the plan, the insurgents in late 1961 and early 1962 installed guerrilla bands in eight widely separated mountain regions of Venezuela, including Falcón. It was anticipated that the guerrillas, who were mostly students from Caracas and other cities, could move swiftly into offensive actions and attract peasant recruits in the wake of initial victories over government forces.<sup>1</sup>

In Falcón, as elsewhere in Venezuela, the results of this precipitate approach to guerrilla war were disastrous. In February 1962, mountaineers in the Sierra de Churuguara assisted an Army unit to capture 19 guerrillas who opened a camp near Agua Linda.<sup>2</sup> In April, police arrested five guerrillas, including one previously trained in Cuba, after discovering a camp near Jácura in the easternmost extension of the Sierra de Churuguara.<sup>3</sup> A short time later, government forces rounded up 15 more Falcón guerrillas, some of them Caracas university students, who were moving about near Cabure and Pueblo Nuevo in the Sierra de Coro.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, at the time these insurgent disasters were in progress, Douglas Bravo and Domingo Urbina were also in the Falcón mountains but were making preparations of another kind for guerrilla warfare. Instead of moving prematurely into action, or appearing among the mountaineers with a guerrilla entourage, the two men moved quietly about the Falcón sierras for most of 1962, avoiding government search parties, establishing contacts with the local populations, and reconnoitering terrain and campsites. They were in the Falcón mountains as early as February-March 1962; but it was Summer before they opened training camps, and December before they risked overt action.<sup>5</sup>

1. See above, Chapter 2, for a fuller description of the "rapid victory" strategy.
2. El Universal, 22, 23 February, 4, 9 May 1962.
3. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 273.
4. El Nacional, 21 April 1962; El Universal, 3 and 5 May 1962; Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 51-68.
5. El Universal, 27 February, 4 March, 23 April, 16 September 1962; El Nacional, 5 July and 22 August 1962; La Esfera, 12 February, 1963; Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. 42-43.

Urbina and Bravo worked together for a time, then separated. Urbina became the top guerrilla leader in the Sierra de Churuguara, with a local mountaineer, Baudilio Loyo, as his principal lieutenant. According to government estimate, Urbina put together a guerrilla force of 25-50 men by late 1962, mostly youthful mountaineer recruits. He expanded his family ties with the Sierra de Churuguara population in December 1962 by marrying a peasant's daughter in a village near La Taza.<sup>1</sup>

Douglas Bravo became the commander of another guerrilla band in the Sierra de Coro, with Elías Manuitt Camero as his second in command. According to an official estimate, Bravo had a force of 60-70 Falcón and non-Falcón men as of late 1962. Many of the recruits from other parts of Venezuela reached him in September by the simple device of moving by automobile towards a popular mountain swimming resort on the La Vela de Coro-Pueblo Nuevo road, then disappearing into the hills. Two doctors were included in the group.<sup>2</sup>

Phase II. In December 1962 the Castro-Communists in Venezuela received a psychological as well as material setback when 101 guerrillas captured by government forces in earlier encounters were sentenced to long prison terms after a mass trial in Caracas. In an obvious effort to distract public attention, and to show the guerrilla flag, a group of 12 insurgents possibly led by Douglas Bravo broke into a roadside cafe near Pueblo Nuevo in the Sierra de Coro on 9 December and killed two policemen. This action led to a strong government counteroffensive against the guerrillas, involving Army forces which newspapers estimated to number as many as 3,000 men.<sup>3</sup>

The Army moved into the Falcón mountains on 15 January 1963. Checkpoints were established on all roads leading into the sierras. Troops, most of them young conscripts, carried out house-to-house searches in mountain villages, and then began to probe the more remote mountain regions

1. El Universal, 20 January 1963; El Nacional, 20 February 1963.

2. El Nacional, 19 September 1962 and 5 January 1963.

3. El Universal, 10 December 1962; El Nacional, 22 January 1963.

in search of the guerrillas. Meantime, in a clandestine manifesto circulated in Coro, the three principal guerrilla leaders — Bravo, Manuitt Camero, and Urbina — announced that they would avoid any contact with the Army but would attack agents of the security police (DIGEPOL) who were involved in the anti-guerrilla operations.<sup>1</sup>

Troops in the Sierra de Churuguara moved out of the villages and into the mountains about 1 February 1963, penetrating to a number of caves near La Taza and El Torito previously used by Domingo Urbina and his men as hideouts. Under pressure of the advance, Urbina's guerrilla band disintegrated without a fight. The majority of his mountaineer recruits abandoned guerrilla life and returned secretly to their families; eight were captured after they panicked when an Air Force helicopter appeared overhead. Urbina, Baudilio Loyo, and a die-hard group of 8 men reportedly fled towards Maparari in the western part of the sierra, then back to the cave region near La Taza, where aerial bombardment was used at the end of March 1963 in an unsuccessful military attempt to flush them out.<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously, another Army anti-guerrilla operation went forward in the Sierra de Coro, but with less initial result. Newspaper accounts indicate that the Army first attempted to starve out Bravo's guerrillas by a siege operation. Two months passed without any reported encounter between the insurgents and government forces. At the end of March 1963, after a guerrilla force ambushed a police patrol near Cabure, the military took the offensive. Air Force planes showered the guerrilla hideout areas with 100-pound fragmentation bombs, and Army units moved out from several points in an encirclement operation.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Nacional, 23 January, 4 February 1963.
2. El Nacional, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, 14 February 1963; El Universal, 7, 8 February, 1, 2 April 1963.
3. El Nacional, 25 January, 1, 4 April 1963; El Universal, 1, 8 February, 1; 3, 6 April 1963.

The Army advance into the Sierra de Coro was hampered by steep local terrain and persistent rainfall. It failed to encircle the guerrillas or to capture Douglas Bravo, Elías Manuitt Camero, or any other important insurgent leader. By pressing the attack, however, the troops succeeded in locating at least nine guerrilla camps and capturing 60 automatic rifles, sub-machine guns, and rifles, as well as "numerous" rounds of ammunition. Discoveries made several months later indicated that some of the troops had penetrated to within a few hundred feet of a hidden cleft in the mountains where the main guerrilla base camp was then located.<sup>1</sup>

Military operations in the Falcón mountains were terminated in June 1963, after weeks had passed with almost no sign of continued guerrilla presence in the area. The authorities estimated, correctly, that Domingo Urbina's guerrillas in the Sierra de Churuguara were badly demoralized and no longer a significant threat. They assumed, incorrectly, that Douglas Bravo's band in the Sierra de Coro was in a like condition.

Phase III. The Army withdrawal from the Falcón sierras occurred at a period when the Castro-Communists in Venezuela were engaged in a major step-up of urban insurgency violence which they hoped would lead to the overthrow of President Rómulo Betancourt or, at the least, prevent or disrupt the elections of December 1963 that would determine Betancourt's successor. To support this effort, the Falcón guerrillas went again into action almost as soon as the last Army forces were out of the mountains. Their operations were now under the single command of Douglas Bravo and emanated almost entirely from the Sierra de Coro.<sup>2</sup> Reinforcements came from Caracas to support the revived effort.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Nacional, 6 April and 21 October 1963.
2. Domingo Urbina's guerrillas in the Sierra de Churuguara virtually withdrew from further action, except for a brief flurry of activity in November-December 1963. El Universal, 12, 13 November and 14 December 1963.
3. El Universal, 28 July 1963; El Nacional, 20 November and 19 December 1963.

The tactics of the Falcón guerrillas also underwent a marked change. Instead of clinging to their refuge area in the Sierra de Coro, the insurgents began to rove out in borrowed or stolen trucks and automobiles to attack points as far distant as Aracua, Pueblo Cumarebo, Pueblo Zazarida, and Mirimire. A common technique was to descend suddenly on a village, seize the mayor's office and police station, disarm local policemen, and proclaim the village as part of "Free Venezuela" for the brief period that the guerrillas remained in it. Attacks of this nature began in July 1963 and continued intermittently into the late Autumn.<sup>1</sup>

The Venezuelan Army at this period was heavily engaged in plans to protect the cities of the country against the violent attempt by the Castro-Communists to disrupt the December 1963 elections. Consequently, it either could not or did not wish to send as many troops into the Falcón mountains as had been used in the operations of January-June 1963. Instead, small police-military units of platoon-size or smaller were sent to counter the guerrilla thrust. Emphasis was placed on hunter-killer tactics rather than the ponderous encirclement actions employed by the Army in Falcón during the early part of 1963.<sup>2</sup>

The new government tactics, and the more aggressive tactics of Bravo's guerrillas, led to a series of small engagements in late 1963 across the broad area between Mirimire and Pueblo Nuevo in the Sierra de Coro. In October, a small Army unit scored an important victory when a peasant, or guerrilla deserter, led it to the main insurgent base camp in the Sierra de Coro. The camp was located in difficult terrain, about 4 hours' walking time from Curimagua. It could be approached only on foot and was hidden in a natural cleft, or hollow, of the mountain range. The north side had several escape routes; the south overlooked an abyss of almost a half mile in depth. Military

1. El Universal and El Nacional, July-December 1963, passim.

2. El Universal, 28 August, 24 September, 6 October 1963.

spokesmen estimated that the camp was equipped to house 30-40 persons on a permanent basis. The materiel confiscated included a radio transmitter-receiver, field radios, homemade bombs or grenades, large quantities of ammunition, foodstuffs, and medicine, and personal effects of Douglas Bravo and Elias Manuitt Camero.<sup>1</sup>

The loss of the main Sierra de Coro camp brought a period of grave difficulty to the Falcón guerrillas, forcing them into a roving hit-and-run life under pursuit by an estimated 400 soldiers. Several guerrillas were killed in November 1963 between Pueblo Nuevo and Pueblo Zazarida. In December, a force of 15 soldiers guided by a guerrilla deserter penetrated to a camp known as "Mi Cielito," some 20 miles east of Pueblo Nuevo and overlooking the Hueque River. The Ministry of Defense reported that "several guerrillas" were killed in a fight at the camp; unofficial reports claimed a total of 10-15 dead.<sup>2</sup>

The affray at "Mi Cielito" occurred on 3 December 1963. Only two days before, the total insurgent effort had suffered a far more serious defeat when millions of Venezuelan citizens braved insurgent threats of death and voted in the national elections that the Castro-Communists had sworn to prevent or disrupt. For several months following the December elections and the "Mi Cielito" encounter, almost no guerrilla activity was recorded in Falcón. Domingo Urbina made his peace with the authorities and went into exile; some 40 other guerrillas also laid down their arms.<sup>3</sup> The Governor of Falcón State reported in January 1964 that less than 50 guerrillas were left in the mountains. He described them as "battered and demoralized."<sup>4</sup>

1. El Nacional, 20, 21 October 1963.

2. El Universal, 4 November, 4, 5, December 1963; El Nacional, 7, 9 December 1963.

3. El Nacional, 5 February 1964; El Universal, 23 April 1964.

4. El Nacional, 26 January 1964.

Phase IV. In Spring 1964 the Castro-Communist insurgent command in Venezuela met in secret session at Caracas and resolved upon a new insurgency strategy which placed primary emphasis on protracted rural guerrilla war.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the new strategy, and taking advantage of relaxed government security precautions in the Falcón sierras, reinforcements of men and arms were sent in Summer 1964 to the guerrillas still holding out in the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara. By August, the insurgents in the two sierras may have numbered as many as 150 men.<sup>2</sup>

The revival of the Falcón guerrilla effort was signalized on 14 July 1964 when 4 insurgents armed with submachine guns shot down a policeman at Acurigua on the La Vela de Coro-Pueblo Nuevo road. Two days later terrorists in Coro assassinated a policeman who was a native of Curimagua and had served as a guide for Army forces in the Sierra de Coro. On 23 July a group of 10 guerrillas ambushed an Army jeep traveling on the San Luis-Cabure road and attempted to capture the prefecture in San Luis.<sup>3</sup>

More guerrilla attacks followed in August-September 1964, as Army forces moved in pursuit. On 17 August, a group of 9 uniformed insurgents murdered a peasant near Siburúa, on the northern flank of the Sierra de Coro, on charges that he also had served as a guide for Army forces. On 4 September, guerrillas engaged government forces in the village of La Cruz de Taratara, south of San Luis. On the same day, guerrillas in the Sierra de Churuguara, where command had passed from Domingo Urbina to Baudilio Loyo, clashed with government forces. On 11-12 September,

1. See above, Chapter 5 of this report.
2. Newspaper reports, citing unnamed officials as sources of information, listed 30 guerrillas dead, 56 captured, and "more than 200 put to flight" in Falcón as of November 1964. Allowing for a probable exaggeration in number of insurgents supposedly put to flight, it may be inferred from these accounts that about 150 guerrillas were in the Falcón mountains as of late Summer 1964. El Universal, 26 November 1964; La Esfera, 30 November 1964.
3. El Nacional, 15, 16, 17, 18, 27 July 1964; El Universal, 24 July 1964.

guerrillas attacked two villages near Acurigua on the La Vela de Coro-Pueblo Nuevo road. At the end of September the guerrillas carried out co-ordinated assaults on a scale never before seen in the Falcón mountains. One group attacked a military post at Cabure; others attacked the widely separated villages of Pecaya, Pueblo Nuevo, and Santa Cruz de Bucaral; and a group of 32 men led by Baudilio Loyo sacked a town near Agua Linda in the Sierra de Churuguara and murdered a local official.<sup>1</sup>

Army forces moved back into the Falcón mountains in response to the guerrilla outburst, utilizing counterinsurgency measures of unprecedented vigor. For the first time, hundreds of mountaineers were taken into custody on charges of giving aid to the insurgents. Guerrilla refuge zones in the Sierras de Coro and Churuguara were subjected to repeated aerial bombardment, presumably with incendiaries as well as fragmentation bombs, for a huge fire was started in the Sierra de Coro that raged out of control for several days. Army troops engaged in a dozen or more small clashes with the guerrillas and attempted to seal off possible exits from the insurgent refuge areas. But they did not penetrate as on earlier occasions into the deepest recesses of the Sierra de Coro, for fear of ambush and after discovery that the guerrillas had extensively mined approach routes.<sup>2</sup>

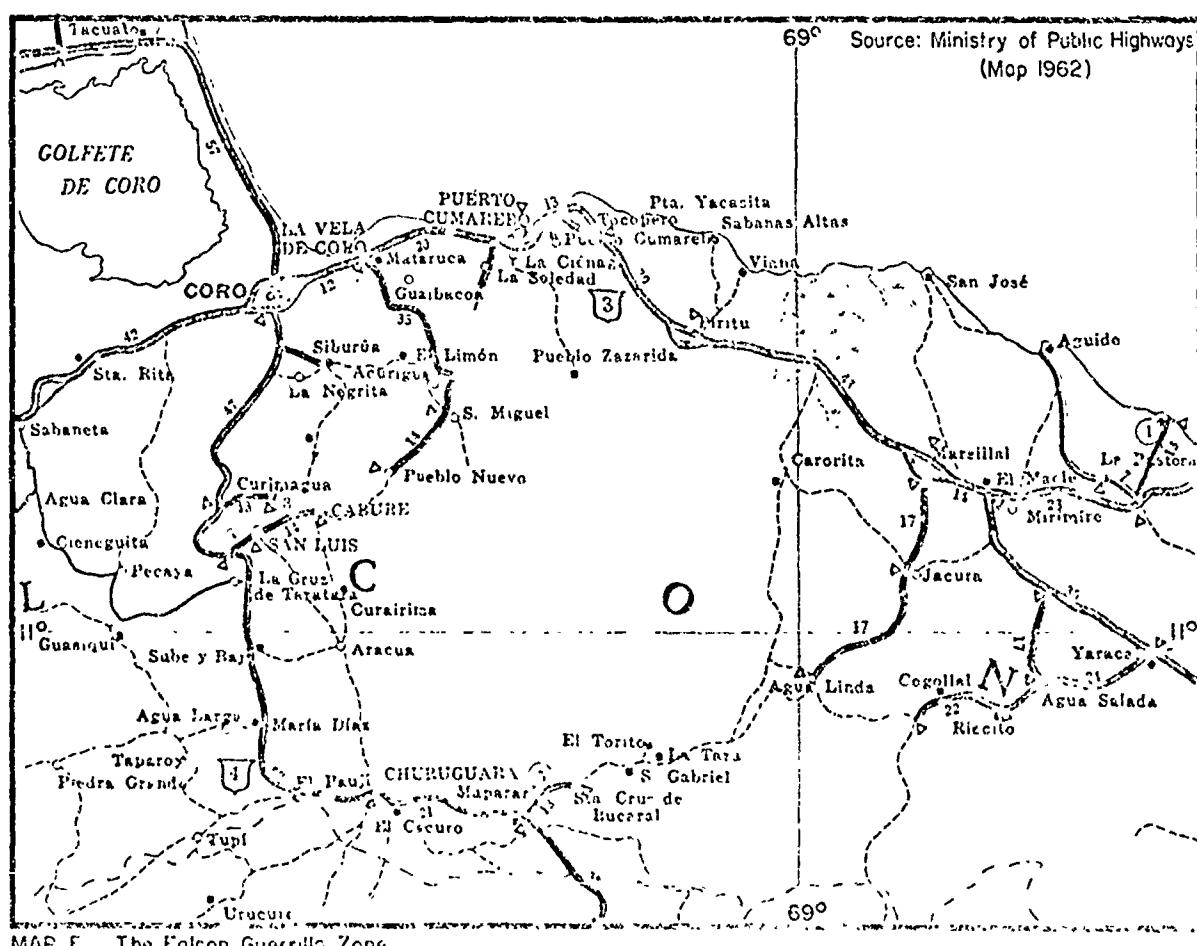
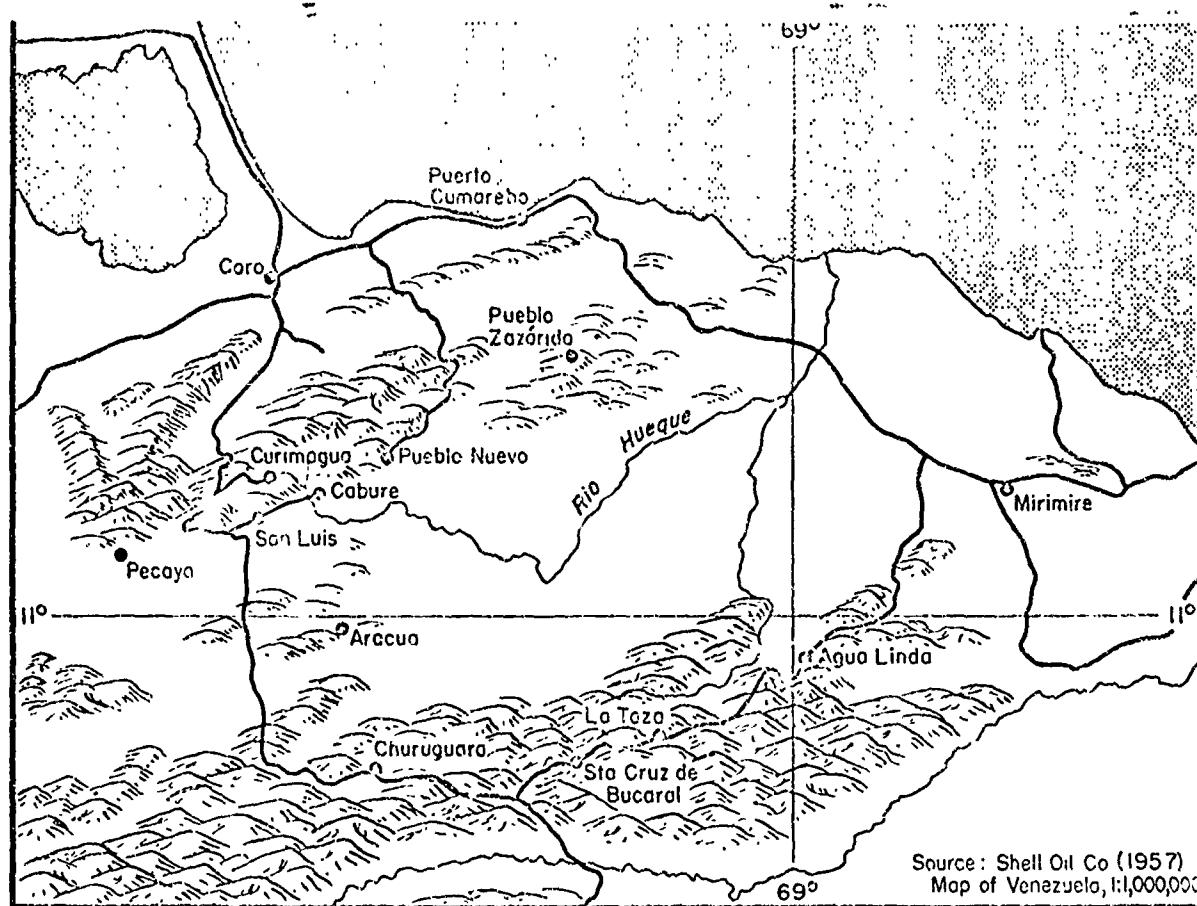
As of late Autumn 1964, military sources reported that 30 guerrillas had been killed in Falcón and 56 captured. The Governor of Falcón State reported that only about 40 guerrillas still remained at large, one group in the Sierra de Coro, the other in the Sierra de Churuguara. The Governor also announced seizure of 12 guerrilla camps and capture of 50 submachine guns, 30 rifles, and 40 pistols and other weapons.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Universal, 18 August, 5, 12, 13, 24, 25 September 1964.
2. El Universal and El Nacional, October-November 1964, passim. According to one newspaper report, the guerrilla mine-laying was so intensive that more than 90 mines were discovered in one 12-acre area. La Esfera, 30 November 1964.
3. El Universal, 19 November and 3 December 1964.

The outcome of the Falcón anti-guerrilla operations was uncertain at the end of 1964. Neither Douglas Bravo, Manuitt Camero, Baudilio Loyo, nor the 13 other guerrillas for whom the government had offered large rewards had been captured or was known to be dead. Occasional small-scale guerrilla attacks on military patrols and posts also occurred in November-December 1964. The Venezuelan Army has promised, however, that its units will remain in the Falcón mountains until such a time as the guerrillas are eliminated.<sup>1</sup>

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1. El Nacional, 19 and 29 November 1964.



## Chapter 13

### THE EL CHARAL GUERRILLAS

Some 100 miles to the south of the Falcón mountains lies the only other area of prolonged Castro-Communist guerrilla activity in Venezuela: the Andean region of El Charal.<sup>1</sup> It is a tangled region of mountains, canyons, and valleys through which guerrillas have ranged to as far north as the environs of Sanare (Population: 3,590), to as far west as Humocaro Bajo (Population: 2,077), and to below Boconó (Population: 10,434) in the south. It is also a region in which the counterinsurgency task is complicated by the fact that the guerrillas operate across the borders of four Venezuelan States — Lara, Portuguesa, Trujillo, Barinas — and therefore across the borders of four separate State Police jurisdictions.<sup>2</sup>

The first Castro-Communist guerrilla band entered the region in early 1962 and established itself in the El Charal mountains, a short distance to the south of the small villages of San Rafael and Concepción in Portuguesa State. The name "El Charal" has since been used in Venezuela to denote the entire guerrilla region and is so used in this chapter.

#### The El Charal Guerrilla Base Area

The mountains in the El Charal guerrilla area extend in a general north-south direction, with many east-west folds. Between Boconó and the two Humocaros are the highest peaks in the area, with elevations of 10,000 to 12,000 feet. Elsewhere, the mountains seldom exceed 5,000-7,000 feet.

1. See the fold-out orientation map of the El Charal guerrilla region appended to this chapter.
2. "Every country is divided for military and administrative purposes into provinces, counties, districts, zones, etc. The border areas are a permanent source of weakness for the counterinsurgent whatever his administrative structures, and this advantage is usually exploited by the insurgent, especially in the initial violent stages of the insurgency. By moving from one side of the border to the other, the insurgent is often able to escape pressure or, at least, to complicate operations for his opponent." David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964, p. 35.

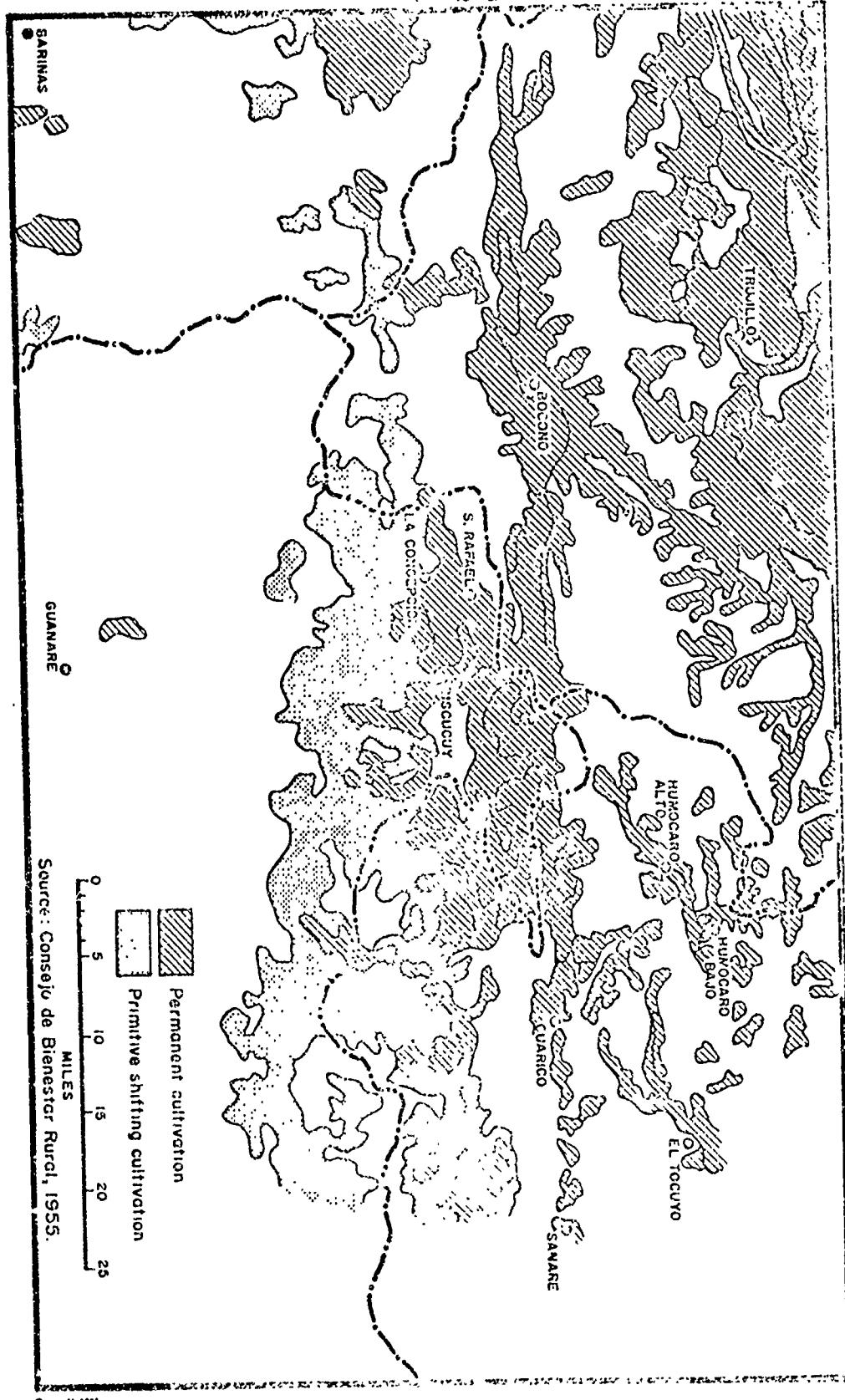
The highway system in the El Charal area indicates the location and trend of the most significant valley systems. In the north, the broad valley associated with the Tocuyo River divides into narrow fingers which reach to the two Humocaros and Guarico (Population: 2,589). In the south, the narrow valley which encloses Mesitas, Niquitao, Tostos, and Boconó is connected by tortuous mountain highways with Trujillo (Population: 18,935) and Biscucuy (Population: 3,906). The most important east-west valley lies along the Guanare River, which has its headwaters near Campo Elías (Population: 1,328) and Chabasquén (Population: 2,321). The highway which runs through Guanare (Population: 18,476), from Acarigua in the north to Barinas in the south, marks the physical boundary between the mountain foothills and the great interior plain, or llanos, of Venezuela.

Rainfall in the El Charal region comes mainly from the east, across the broad and almost featureless llanos. On the lower eastern mountain slopes, the rainfall is heavy, but vegetation is limited to dwarf oak because a lateritic soil assists rapid run-off.<sup>1</sup> Higher up, in elevations of 2,500 to 7,000 feet or more, are regions of perpetually green forest which provide good cover for guerrilla bands.<sup>2</sup>

With westward progression, rainfall and vegetation cover diminish. Forest maps indicate that patches of tree cover extend to as far west as the environs of Boconó and the two Humocaros, but not west of Sanare where the broader expanses of the Tocuyo Valley receive so little rain that irrigated agriculture is practiced. Ground water appears to be scarce at certain seasons of the year, for a number of guerrillas captured in the western reaches of the El Charal area have exhibited symptoms of acute dehydration.<sup>3</sup>

1. Venezuela, Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, Estudio de las zonas forestales del estado Portuguesa, Caracas, 1949, pp. 56-57.
2. Photographs of mountains in the El Charal region indicate that forest cover is extensive but not continuous. The forests are densest in lower valley regions and reach up the slopes of mountains along the sides of protective folds. Meadows appear on mountain crests and ridges.
3. E.g., El Universal, 25 April 1962; La Esfera, 10 and 16 April 1962; El Nacional, 1 November 1964.

MAP 6. Agricultural Regions in El Chorol



Food is a serious problem for the guerrillas in many parts of the El Charal area. The valleys, basins, and more fertile mountain slopes are mainly occupied by large coffee plantations since this is a more valuable cash crop than foodstuffs. The higher mountain ranges on the eastern side of the El Charal area, as indicated in Map G, are given over to a primitive shifting cultivation which barely meets the needs of the local mountain populations. This is the domain of the conuquero: the Venezuelan squatter-farmer who lives at near-subsistence level by burning off a piece of forest land, clearing a small plot (conuco) for corn and beans, and then shifting to another piece of forest land in three or four years when the topsoil in the original conuco is exhausted.

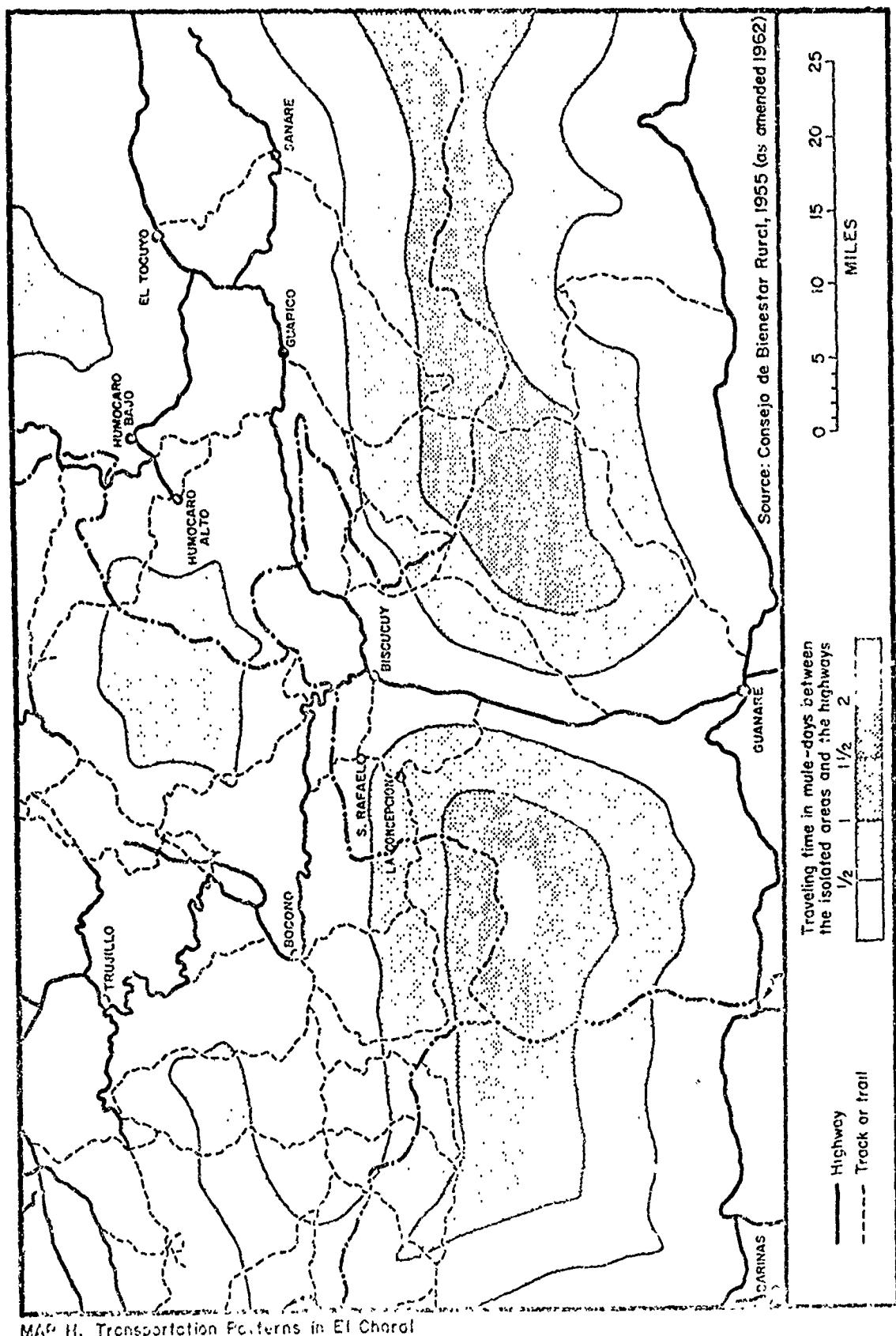
The main highways in the El Charal area are paved or graveled throughout. Once off them, however, travel into the mountains and towards the more remote mountain villages is difficult and time-consuming. Some trails can be traversed by jeep; others, only by mule or on foot. Map H, on the following page, indicates the transportation pattern and also, in the shaded areas, the refuge zones from which the guerrillas in El Charal have operated.

#### Local Population Factors

The political sympathies of the El Charal population, whether settled lowland farmer or mountain conuquero, are heavily in favor of the Acción Democrática Party of Presidents Rómulo Betancourt and Raúl Leoni. In the December 1958 elections, for example, the areas of greatest guerrilla activity in El Charal returned 34,550 votes for AD congressional candidates, as compared to 6,325 for the Social Christians (COPEI), 4,799 for the Unión Republicana Democrática (URD), and only 977 for the Communists.<sup>1</sup>

1. An argument sometimes put forward to explain the Castro-Communist guerrilla presence in El Charal alleges that the insurgents first established themselves near Humocaro Alto, which is said to be the only village in the region that gave the Communists a majority in the 1958 election. The facts do not support this thesis. The actual vote in Humocaro Alto was 993 for AD congressional candidates, 128 for URD, and 12 for the Communists. Venezuela, Consejo Supremo Electoral, Resultado de las votaciones efectuadas el 7 de diciembre de 1958 p. IARA-12.

MAP H



MAP H, Transportation Facilities in El Chorl

The strong popular support for the anti-Communist AD Party, however, is partially counterbalanced by two factors which help to explain the Castro-Communist guerrilla foothold in the region.

First, a number of the owners of the large coffee plantations in El Charal are bitter opponents of the AD Party and are associated with the URD, a Party which in El Charal as elsewhere is infiltrated by Communist fellow-travelers. These plantation owners belong, as a rule, to influential families which have resided in the El Charal region for generations. There are persistent reports that some of the plantation owners have supplied food and lodging to the guerrillas: a support that is highly important in a coffee region where food is in short supply and only plantation owners can buy large quantities of provisions without arousing suspicion.<sup>1</sup>

Second, although the Betancourt and Leoni administrations have worked with greater speed than any previous Venezuelan governments to better the material life of the El Charal population, it has been difficult to bring improvements to the many small mountain villages in the region which can only be reached by mule or on foot over steep trails. Nearly all the public benefits that have come to El Charal have been confined to settlements located on or near main roads. Life in the more isolated villages has continued without schools, doctors, or electricity; in some areas, adult illiteracy is still as high as 90 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The Castro-Communist guerrillas have profited from this situation in two ways: they have made friends with some backwoods mountaineers by aiding them in simple tasks; and they have established their authority by terror over other mountaineers who live beyond the effective reach of State police forces.<sup>3</sup> It is probable also that the guerrillas have

1. Washington Post, 26 December 1964; also El Nacional, 5 September 1962 and 30 January 1964.
2. El Nacional, 14 September 1962 and 20 May 1964; Washington Post, 26 December 1964. Also George W. Hill et al., "La vida rural en Venezuela," Revista de sanidad y asistencia social (Caracas), January-April 1959, pp. 62-149; Anibal Luitron, Exodo rural en Venezuela, Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1956, pp. 9-15.
3. El Universal, 27 August 1963, 8 February 1964; also see the letter of the El Charal guerrilla leader, Juan Vicente Cabezas, in a later section of this chapter.

capitalized on the latent animosities between the backwoods mountaineers and the more prosperous populations in the lowland towns and villages.<sup>1</sup>

#### Guerrilla Personnel

In El Charal as in the Falcón mountains, the presence in the guerrilla ranks of men with local family connections has been an important factor in assisting Castro-Communist insurgents to gain a foothold. In the case of El Charal, the insurgents initially possessed two leaders who belonged to important families in the region: Argimiro Gabaldón and Lino José Díaz.

Argimiro Gabaldón (1918-1964) was the son of General José Rafael Gabaldón (1883- ), a prominent landowner in Trujillo State who led a rebellion in 1928 against the Venezuelan dictator, Juan Vicente Gómez, and briefly seized control of virtually the entire area comprised within the El Charal guerrilla zone. In the late 1930's and the 1940's General Gabaldón was twice Governor of Lara State, which encompasses the region between Barquisimeto, Biscucuy, and Carache. In 1945, General Gabaldón purchased a large coffee estate (22,500 acres) near Biscucuy which he held until 1961, when it was sold to the government for redistribution under the Betancourt administration's agrarian reform program.<sup>2</sup> Since 1948, General Gabaldón

1. A major study of rural Venezuela published in 1956 notes the indifference of government officials in towns and larger villages to the problems of peasants in the isolated mountain settlements. The case is cited of a mountaineer woman who died in childbirth because officials in the State capital and in the village which served as local district capital would not provide funds to pay for her transportation to the State capital for a caesarean operation. On the day of her burial, her parish priest called his congregation's attention to the large official sums being spent that day in the State capital on a reception and feast for visiting bicycle racers. George W. Hill, "La vida rural en Venezuela," pp. 64-65.
2. El Universal, 7 September 1961.

has lived in semi-retirement at Caracas, presiding over a Communist-front Committee for Peace and Democracy.<sup>1</sup>

Argimiro Gabaldón was educated in Brazil and Argentina and became a member of the Communist Party after his return to Venezuela. In early 1962, when he set himself up as a guerrilla leader in the El Charal area, he reportedly owned a farm or coffee plantation near Guanare or Biscucuy.<sup>2</sup> Other members of the Gabaldón family formerly owned, and may still own, large estates near Boconó.<sup>3</sup> The fact that Argimiro Gabaldón was recognized by many persons while leading a guerrilla raid in April 1962 near Humocaro Bajo suggests that he may also have been a landowner or a prominent personage in this region.<sup>4</sup>

Lino José Díaz, the second guerrilla of El Charal origin, was born in Humocaro Alto. He is described in a press account of 1962 as a young cattleman who was joined in insurgency by one of his brothers. Another brother, Miguel Díaz, described in the press as a "rich farmer" of Humocaro Alto, apparently has remained on the government's side in the guerrilla fight.<sup>5</sup> Persons named Díaz, who may or may not be related to Lino José Díaz, formerly held and may still hold large estates near Guarico, Sanare, and El Tocuyo.<sup>6</sup>

The top guerrilla command in El Charal, however, has not been held either by Argimiro Gabaldón or Lino Díaz but by Juan Vicente Cabezas, a member of the Communist Party who is probably not a native of the region.

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1. Quién es quién en Venezuela, Panamá, Ecuador, Colombia, 1952, article "Gabaldón, José Rafael."
  2. La Esfera, 10 March 1962; also Radio Havana broadcast, 12 May 1962.
  3. F. Benet, Guía general de Venezuela, Caracas, 1929, p. 299.
  4. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, p. 266.
  5. El Nacional, 5 September 1962; La Esfera, 9 and 11 April 1962.
  6. F. Benet, Guía general de Venezuela, 1929, pp. 476, 480, 482.

Cabezas was educated at the Central University of Caracas and was imprisoned for revolutionary activity against the dictator Pérez Jiménez (1950-1958). He took part in Castro-Communist terrorist actions at Caracas, before assuming in early 1962 the role of a guerrilla leader in El Charal.<sup>1</sup>

The insurgent forces commanded by Cabezas, Gabaldón, and Díaz in the initial El Charal guerrilla actions of early 1962 consisted almost entirely of university students and other youths from Caracas. Fragmentary information supplied by the Venezuelan Government as to the identity of guerrillas killed or captured in El Charal during 1963-1964 suggests that the bulk of the insurgents operating in the region have continued to be of predominantly non-El Charal origin. Scores of El Charal residents have been arrested, however, on charges of collaboration with the guerrillas.

#### Guerrilla Operations

Phase I. The first Castro-Communist guerrilla actions in El Charal were part of the ambitious insurgent master plan for "rapid victory" in Venezuela by late 1962.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the strategy, two guerrilla bands, each consisting of about 40 Caracas youths, suddenly appeared in the El Charal mountains in the early months of 1962 and prepared for aggressive action. One band was led by Juan Vicente Cabezas; the other by Argimiro Gabaldón, with Lino Díaz as a sub-commander.

Wherever else in Venezuela the Castro-Communists so boldly moved into guerrilla war, they encountered an almost solid wall of peasant resentment and met with swift disaster. The case of El Charal conformed to the general pattern. Cabezas had barely installed his band in the mountains south of San Rafael and Concepción during February 1962 before he came under attack by government forces guided by local peasants. In less than three weeks he lost 24 men: one in combat and 23 by capture.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Universal, 23 December 1963; Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. 355-356.
2. See above, Chapter 2 of this report.
3. Ministry of Defense communique, published in El Universal, 9 May 1962; El Nacional, 3 April 1962.

Argimiro Gabaldón's guerrillas met with a similar fate. They initially assembled in March 1962 on a large farm or coffee estate near Guarico for preliminary training. About the end of March, they moved to an advance camp on the El Tocuyo-Humocaros road. On 3 April a force variously estimated at 30-50 men attacked a highway construction camp between Humocaro Bajo and Humocaro Alto, seized three trucks, invaded and briefly held Humocaro Alto, and fled towards the high mountains (10,000 - 12,000 feet) north of Guaito.<sup>1</sup> In the next few days, government forces and local peasantry captured 21 of the guerrillas and killed 7 more.<sup>2</sup>

The initial and heavy insurgent defeats in El Charal as of early 1962 were followed by a long period of guerrilla inactivity which lasted, with few interruptions, through the remainder of the year and through most of 1963. Almost nothing is heard of Gabaldón's guerrillas during this interval. The activities of Cabezas, in the mountains south of San Rafael and Concepción, are described in three letters of August 1962 written to insurgent leaders at Caracas and Biscucuy.<sup>3</sup> The letters are of special interest as indicating: (a) means used by the guerrillas to win friends among the backwoods mountaineers of El Charal; (b) the heavy guerrilla reliance on outside support for reinforcements, ammunition, money, etc.; and (c) the role of Communist Party and URD Party members in such towns as Guanare, Biscucuy, and Boconó as the agents through which the guerrillas received reinforcements, intelligence, and supplies.

1. The assault on Humocaro Alto was an operation of a type practiced on several later occasions by El Charal guerrillas. The insurgents came into the town by motor vehicle at 3:30 A.M., cut telephone and telegraph lines, attacked the building housing the mayor's office and police station, seized arms and food, and fled in stolen vehicles later found abandoned on a mountain road.
2. Ministry of Defense communique, published in El Universal, 9 May 1962; also El Nacional, 4 April 1962; La Esfera, 5, 9, 12, 15, 22 April 1962; Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, 268-270.
3. Two of the letters from Cabezas are published in Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1963, pp. 293-296; a third in El Nacional, 31 August 1962.

T

\* \* \* \* \*

1 August 1962

R Comrade Victoriano,

A 1. While the reinforcements arrived, we were spending much time in doing work for the peasants: clearing conucos, helping to repair peasant houses, etc.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, the enemy learned again of our presence through the gossip of some peasants, and he has been in our zone for nine days now. We are once again in a position of almost absolute concealment, although we use the occasion for training and for building storage tunnels. We are not thinking of resuming combat until we have consolidated a minimum of strategic positions, such as:

- L a. possession of sufficient money
- b. introduction of canned foods
- c. arrival of reinforcements in bullets and people.

A 2. It is deplorable that up to now it has not been possible to consolidate a rear guard for this front. We are making the same mistakes as in the beginning: slow arrival of people. One cannot delay the arrival of reinforcements for too long, because the enemy has the opportunity to take the initiative and find us without the means to fight. I was told before the 1st of May that I would soon have the people who are needed; today it is the 1st of August (three months later) and still all the requested people have not arrived.

I It seems as though no one is giving any importance to the guerrilla fight, to which little attention has been paid, and that is the reason for all the defeats that we have suffered on this front.

O Since Monday, 23 July, the enemy has been in these regions. They have seized many peasants, and they are looking hard for us, but we

N 1. Conuco: i.e., a small plot of ground of the type cultivated in forest clearings by squatter-farmers in the more isolated Venezuelan mountain regions.

T don't want to fight them because this would expose our reorganization plans. Some Comrades in the command are becoming impatient because the peasants ask us what we are waiting for before we fight, that the conucos are in corn, R that it is harvest time, etc. They don't understand the details, and they want us to fight so as to relieve the repression against them. Nevertheless, a fight would actually harm us because:

A a. The government wants to find a guerrilla group in this area so that it can suspend a URD meeting in Biscucuy and suspend guarantees again.<sup>1</sup>

N b. We have not consolidated the minimum necessary messengers, and we don't have the necessary resources.

S Frankly, Comrade, you don't understand that Bs. 500 monthly L is a joke compared to the expenditures we have to make, and you can imagine how much time we have lost because of the lack of resources. We could have consolidated many strategic places if during all this time we had possessed a fund of Bs. 10,000 as a minimum.<sup>2</sup> We hope to repay as soon as we can carry out an action that we hope to execute soon, and for which we also ask your help.<sup>3</sup>

A 3. The news of the loss of the 9 automatic rifles and the medicines was a hard blow for us, but we are sure of final triumph.<sup>4</sup> None of the peasants T in these parts is going to the URD meeting in Biscucuy. They are very much frightened by the constant visits of the enemy. . . . They say that if they go to the meeting, they can be accused of being guerrillas. . . .

- I 1. The Venezuelan government, according to the varying pressures of Castro-O  
O Communist insurgency violence, has periodically suspended and reinstated constitutional guarantees of a number of civic rights -- e.g., freedom of the press, freedom of assembly. The URD is the Union Republicana Democrática, a political party infiltrated in El Charal as elsewhere in Venezuela by Communist fellow-travelers.
- N 2. Bs. 500: about U. S. \$110. Bs. 10,000: about U.S. \$2,200.
3. The "action" referred to is a bank robbery, presumably in Biscucuy or Guanare. See below, the letter to Comrade Lorenzo.
4. Eight rifles, ammunition, food, and medicine were discovered in July or early August 1962 by Army forces in an abandoned guerrilla camp south of Biscucuy. El Universal, 4 August 1962.

T                  4. We need a sensible, mature, prudent, political cadre to direct  
R                  the Guanare information service. . . We have decided to appoint the blond  
A                  Francisco with whom you spoke, but he is very superficial, very flighty, very  
imprudent, and has no clandestine methods of working although he is very  
brave and agile. If you do not select a cadre for this work, we will have to  
give the responsibility to him, with the certainty that it won't be carried out  
in a very responsible manner.

N                  5. You should think about the possibility of an air drop of supplies  
and materials for making mines. In a few days I will go out and look for a  
suitable site. There will be two suitable sites.

S                  6. REQUEST. Urgent. Indispensable. Sending of the following  
items:

- a. 45 mm bullets
- b. clips for Thompson and ZK (submachine guns)
- c. portable walkie-talkie radio
- d. clips for the 22 Haner
- e. clips for the Browning
- f. fluorescent watches
- g. the small printing press that you told Francisco would  
replace the multigraph

I                  h. the Bs. 10,000 and the means of producing the action I  
mentioned earlier

O                  i. Reinforcements: Ramón, Crisanto, the radio technician,  
the gunpowder technician, a doctor, and Fabio.

N                  Important. The Party organization in Boconó must be activated;  
this is very important. It may become even more important than Guanare  
itself. Comrade Araujo is there, and he says he feels very much alone.  
Remember this. Boconó is very important; and there are many Comrades

T in Caracas who come from Boconó and could help us a lot in these affairs.  
R Already they have offered us 30 volunteers through the URD, and we are  
going to take 5 of them.

R

\* \* \* \* \*

A

3 August 1962

Comrade,

N At last! What joy that I can write to you again. Today we got the  
news that the enemy left the zone after nine days of constant searching.  
S Tomorrow is National Guard Day, and for this reason we are all here bathing  
at the edge of a mountain stream, and all of us are writing.<sup>1</sup> We have lost a  
great deal of time through the fault of the rearguard: more than three months  
L of living an almost peasant life in order to eat and gain new allies.<sup>2</sup> But we  
believe that a false ally has betrayed us because many peasants have been  
imprisoned, and the population is very much frightened. . .

A The peasants want us to fight so that the repression against them  
will ease, but we can't do it now because that way we would mess up the plans  
for organizational consolidation. The enemy has changed tactics; he enters  
with more frequency after three months in which he didn't come. . .

T We are very short of money. I wish you could get some around  
I there: I don't know what happened to the money from the Banco Nacional de  
O Descuento and the Banco Mercantil y Agrícola.<sup>3</sup> Try to send some money

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1. National Guard Day: presumably on this occasion, the National Guardsmen searching for Cabezas were withdrawn for a day of ceremony and rest in Biscucuy and Guanare.
  2. Rearguard: Presumably this term refers to persons in nearby towns who were assisting the guerrilla effort.
  3. The reference is to bank robberies previously executed by Castro-Communist terrorists in Caracas. El Nacional, 31 August 1962.

T with the bearer. . . You must move rapidly and solve all these problems. . .  
Convince Rubén to establish the pharmacy in Guanare, Biscucuy, or Boconó.  
Talk to Victoriano and give him a list of all the Comrades whom you know  
R are from Boconó and who can help the Party there; the place has a very  
strategic position for us. . .

I have been without a jacket for some time. We have almost no  
A clothes. . .

\* \* \* \* \*

N

no date; probably 3 August 1962

S Comrade Lorenzo,

L This time I won't write in the usual manner because we have to  
leave rapidly, taking advantage of this breathing spell. How we need the in-  
formation from Guanare and Biscucuy! I cannot understand the slowness,  
and yet I can explain: it is the lack of money to organize ourselves the way  
we want. . .

A Francisco must have spoken to you about the action and about our  
resolution that he should remain in the Guanare information service. But  
there must be someone there to control him; you must keep him under watch  
T until a cadre is established. Up here, he is no use; he must not enter the  
zone except for an urgent reason. And he is not to be used to infiltrate  
people: the girls were seen because he entered [the zone] with them,  
I publicly, in broad daylight, and that very day they knew about it in Biscucuy.  
The peasant homes don't want to take them in because of this; but their  
arrival has been a big help. . .

O We hope that the UTC's are now ready, because we are very  
harrassed, almost surrounded.<sup>1</sup> A UTC action is a magnificent way to  
unsettle the enemy, to make him lessen the harrassment of this zone.

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1. UTC: Tactical Combat Unit, the name used by the Castro-Communists  
for their urban-based terrorist units.

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The walking-talking [radio] equipment is indispensable. You don't know its importance, because you are not on the spot.  
Zamora must come; we need him very much. Boconó must be attended to. It is of tremendous importance, and there is no one to organize the Party there. . . They have offered us 30 compatriots through the URD, and we are going to take 5, but we have to settle the problem of training first, and then the problem of a guide by some other route. . .

Well, Comrade Lorenzo, to finish, I would be enormously grateful if you would put all your determination into the bank action.<sup>1</sup> It will be our starting point, and for this we are enduring many things without going into action. It depends on you in large part that the thing be done. We hope you have the necessary means of production, and you can count on me. But the thing must be done quickly, because the enemy gives no truce, the enemy is aggressive. . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Cabezas' three letters were intercepted by police and led to further reverses for his band. Two URD Party members who served as his intermediaries in Biscucuy were arrested at the end of August 1962. The recruits from Boconó, referred to in his letters, were also intercepted.<sup>2</sup> Some six or seven guerrillas deserted during August, first fleeing through the mountains to escape execution by their fellow-insurgents, then turning themselves in to the authorities in a half-starved condition.<sup>3</sup> An attempt by Cabezas to move towards Boconó in September 1962 was blocked by Army forces which assembled in the Boconó Valley after the discovery of his letters.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Bank action: i.e., a bank robbery, presumably in Biscucuy or Guanare.
  2. El Nacional, 22 August and 1 September 1962.
  3. La Esfera, 18 August 1962; El Nacional, 20 and 31 August 1962.
  4. El Nacional, 22 September 1962; El Universal, 4 and 7 October 1962.

Despite these reverses, Cabezas remained in the mountains south of Biscucuy through late 1962 and into 1963, cluding government forces and generally avoiding overt insurgency action. According to Venezuelan Army estimate, he had 20 guerrillas in his band. Equipment captured in a February 1963 raid on one of his camps indicated that his small force had been resupplied with clothing, knapsacks, plastic tents, hammocks, and anti-personnel mines.<sup>1</sup>

Cabezas was probably the only El Charal guerrilla leader who kept an insurgent band in continuous existence after the severe defeats of early 1962. The two other guerrilla commanders, Argimiro Gabaldón and Lino Diaz, retired from action and apparently spent considerable time in reconnoitering and establishing contacts in the backwoods mountain villages to the east of the Biscucuy-Sanare highway. In this way, they laid the foundations for future guerrilla revival at a more opportune moment. They also avoided the fate of Fabricio Ojeda, a URD Deputy to the National Congress who resigned his seat in July 1962 and went with three Caracas men to establish an independent guerrilla band in El Charal. Ojeda was in Guarico by early August 1962 and collected seven local recruits; three months later, his half-starved band groped its way out of the mountains and surrendered to pro-government peasantry near Suruguapo.<sup>2</sup>

Phase II. In Summer and Autumn 1963 the volume of insurgency incidents in all parts of Venezuela rose to unprecedented heights as the Castro-Communists made their last attempt to overthrow President Rómulo Betancourt and prevent or disrupt the December elections.<sup>3</sup> As part of this effort, guerrilla activity in the El Charal region revived and expanded. One band presumably

1. El Nacional, and El Universal, 6 May 1963.

2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 61-65; El Nacional, 14, 15, 16 October 1962.

3. See above, Chapter 4 of this report.

commanded by Cabezas, and possibly consisting of more than 50 men, established positions in the mountainous area between Biscucuy, Masparrito, Niquitao, and Boconó. Two other bands, said to total 60-70 men, were under Argimiro Gabaldón's direction in the mountains east and southeast of Sanare and Guarico.<sup>1</sup>

Cabezas. The guerrillas commanded by Juan Vicente Cabezas were the first to go into action. In August-September 1963, they raided a few villages near the Biscucuy-Guanare highway, then retreated deeper into the mountains during October-November under pressure from police and military patrols. Materiel found in six guerrilla camps indicated that the insurgents at this period were well supplied with medicines, minor surgical equipment, food, and clothing. In December, the guerrillas carried out their largest operation when a force of 50 men attacked a small village near Campo Elías, less than 10 miles southwest of Biscucuy.<sup>2</sup>

To counteract the revived guerrilla thrust, the Army launched a coordinated encirclement action in January 1964 from three command posts: Biscucuy, Boconoito, and Boconó. The Army operation terminated in mid-February, after combing what one military source described as a "satisfactory percentage" of the mountainous guerrilla zone.<sup>3</sup> Some 30-50 guerrillas were said to have been captured, principally in the vicinities of Niquitao and Masparrito. The success of the operation south of Biscucuy was also indicated by the virtual cessation of guerrilla actions in this area for several months after February 1964.<sup>4</sup>

Gabaldón. The guerrillas under Argimiro Gabaldón's command stirred into action north of Biscucuy in late August 1963. One group,

1. El Nacional, 2 December 1963 and 3 February 1964; El Universal, 24 December 1963.
2. El Universal, August-December 1963; passim.
3. La República, 29 January 1964; El Nacional, January-February 1964, passim.
4. La República, 15 February 1964.

positioned in the mountains east of Sanare, carried out a few terrorist attacks on nearby villages. Another and stronger guerrilla band operated in the mountains southeast of Guarico. It carried out its largest operation in November 1963, when a force of 20-30 men commandeered jeeps from nearby haciendas and briefly took possession of Guarico (Population: 4,589). For the rest, the band remained in the mountains, establishing control over small backwoods villages beyond the reach of effective or continuous government protection. As of February 1964, at least 10 villages east and southeast of Villa Nueva were without a mayor because of guerrilla threats to kill anyone who assumed the office.<sup>1</sup>

Government operations against Gabaldón's guerrillas during late 1963 and early 1964 were limited to small patrol actions. The only significant victory was the capture of 10-13 guerrillas in a mountain village where they had won over the local population with money and by providing zinc roofing sheets to replace the thatch covers of peasant huts.<sup>2</sup>

Phase III. Guerrilla actions in El Charal trailed off in the early months of 1964 after the losses inflicted on Cabezas' forces and in the wake of the general Castro-Communist failure to disrupt the December 1963 elections. One El Charal guerrilla leader, Lino Díaz, a longtime associate of Argimiro Gabaldón, made his peace with the government and went into exile.<sup>3</sup> For several months, March through July 1964, there was almost no overt guerrilla activity in the El Charal zone.<sup>4</sup> Cabezas and Gabaldón, however, remained in the area and retained command over their respective bands.

1. El Universal and El Nacional, August 1963-February 1964, passim.
2. El Universal, 27 and 28 August 1963. Zinc is highly prized as a roofing material by Venezuelan peasantry, both as a mark of affluence and because thatch roofs are a breeding place for insects.
3. El Nacional, 7 May 1964.
4. In February 1964 government forces seized four guerrillas who were holding an "indoctrination class" for peasantry in the Jabón mountains west of Humocaro Alto. Another nine guerrillas were picked up in June 1964 near Boconó, including Teodoro Petkoff, a former Communist Deputy to the National Congress who escaped from prison in September 1963 and joined Cabezas' forces in El Charal.

In Spring 1964 the Castro-Communist high command in Venezuela assembled in secret session at Caracas and decided on a new insurgency strategy which placed primary emphasis on protracted rural guerrilla war. Reinforcements were sent to El Charal, and the guerrilla bands in the region were reorganized into the "Simón Bolívar Front." Cabezas, with a force estimated at 30-50 men, took up positions in the mountains between Biscucuy, Niquitao, Boconó, and Humocaro Alto. Gabaldón took control of an estimated 60 men southeast of Villa Nueva: one unit of 30 men remained under his personal command; another unit of 30 men was captained by Carlos Luis Hernández Romero (1938-1964), a native of Caracas.<sup>1</sup>

The guerrillas also adopted new tactics, with a view to facilitating survival in the food-poor El Charal zone and avoiding government encirclement actions. Instead of concentrating in large groups, they split into squads of 4, 5, 6, or 7 men, which would come together for an attack, and then disperse to find food and shelter.<sup>2</sup> The guerrillas were also instructed by a Communist Party memorandum to assume a "defensive" posture — i.e., to avoid unnecessary overt action — until such time as the signal was given for a general insurgency "counteroffensive" in 1965 that would link rural guerrilla and urban terrorist actions.<sup>3</sup>

Cabezas. The Army brought the fight to Cabezas' forces in October 1964, at a time when his men were avoiding contact with government forces and attempting to establish positions in the mountains south of Biscucuy and Humocaro Alto. Operations began in Boconó, with a round-up of suspected guerrilla collaborators. On 14 October, nine guerrillas and three soldiers

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1. These details on the guerrilla forces are derived from an article by Juan Liscano in El Nacional, 26 December 1964. Liscano is one of the best-informed Venezuelan political commentators and probably drew on government sources for his information.
  2. El Nacional, 5 September 1964; El Universal, 18 October 1964; Washington Post, 26 December 1964.
  3. El Nacional, 26 December 1964; Washington Post, 26 December 1964.

were killed in a mountain clash near Boconó. This action was followed in late October by aerial bombardment of guerrilla hideout areas near Boconó, with leaflets dropped to warn local peasant families to evacuate.<sup>1</sup>

The guerrillas struck back with an attack near Biscucuy on 30 October and a raid the same day, with 30 men, on the village of Guaitó. The Army replied by sending a reported 2,000-3,000 men against the guerrillas. Aerial bombardment was used again in November against guerrilla hideout areas near Boconó and Guaitó; according to one newspaper report, parachutists were also dropped near Guaitó. At the end of November, when cloud cover hampered aerial actions, the guerrilla areas near Boconó were brought under 35 mm artillery fire.<sup>2</sup>

The results of the anti-guerrilla operations south of Biscucuy and Humocaro Alto were uncertain as of end 1964. Cabezas, the principal guerrilla leader, remained at large. The Army released no figures as to the total number of guerrillas taken or killed; the press reported 12 guerrillas killed, 4 captured.

Gabaldón. The reorganized forces under Argimiro Gabaldón's command went into action on 1 August 1964 with a raid by 15 men on a hamlet near Ospino, a village on the Acarigua-Guanare highway. On 2 September two guerrillas and a policeman were killed northwest of Biscucuy when a peasant guide led a police patrol into an ambush. On 12 September the guerrillas killed a storekeeper who refused them provisions in a mountain village south of Sanare. On 15 September, a unit of 6 men attacked a village near Villa Nueva. On 31 October a force of 30 men attacked a village west of Ospino.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Universal and El Nacional, October 1964, passim.

2. El Universal and El Nacional, October-November 1964, passim.

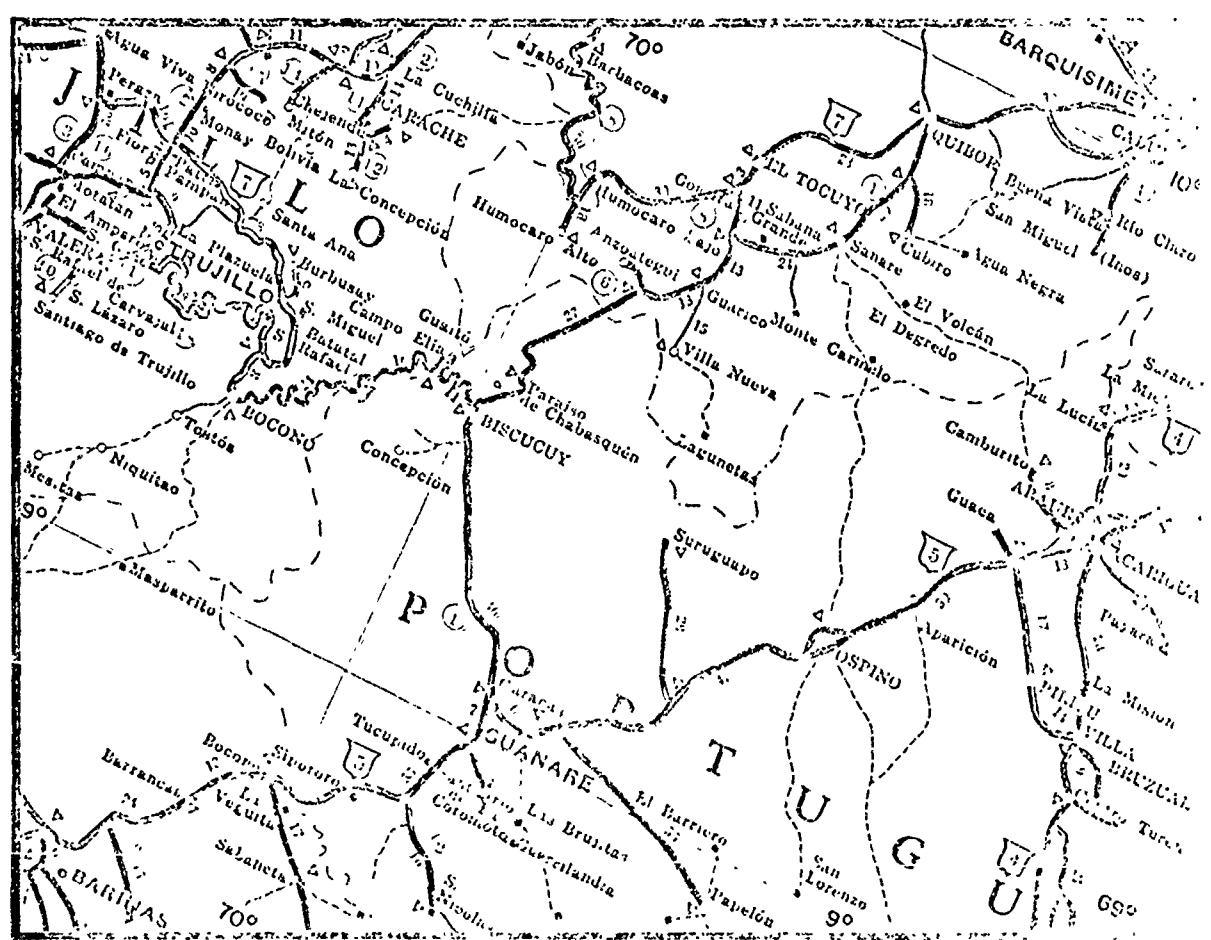
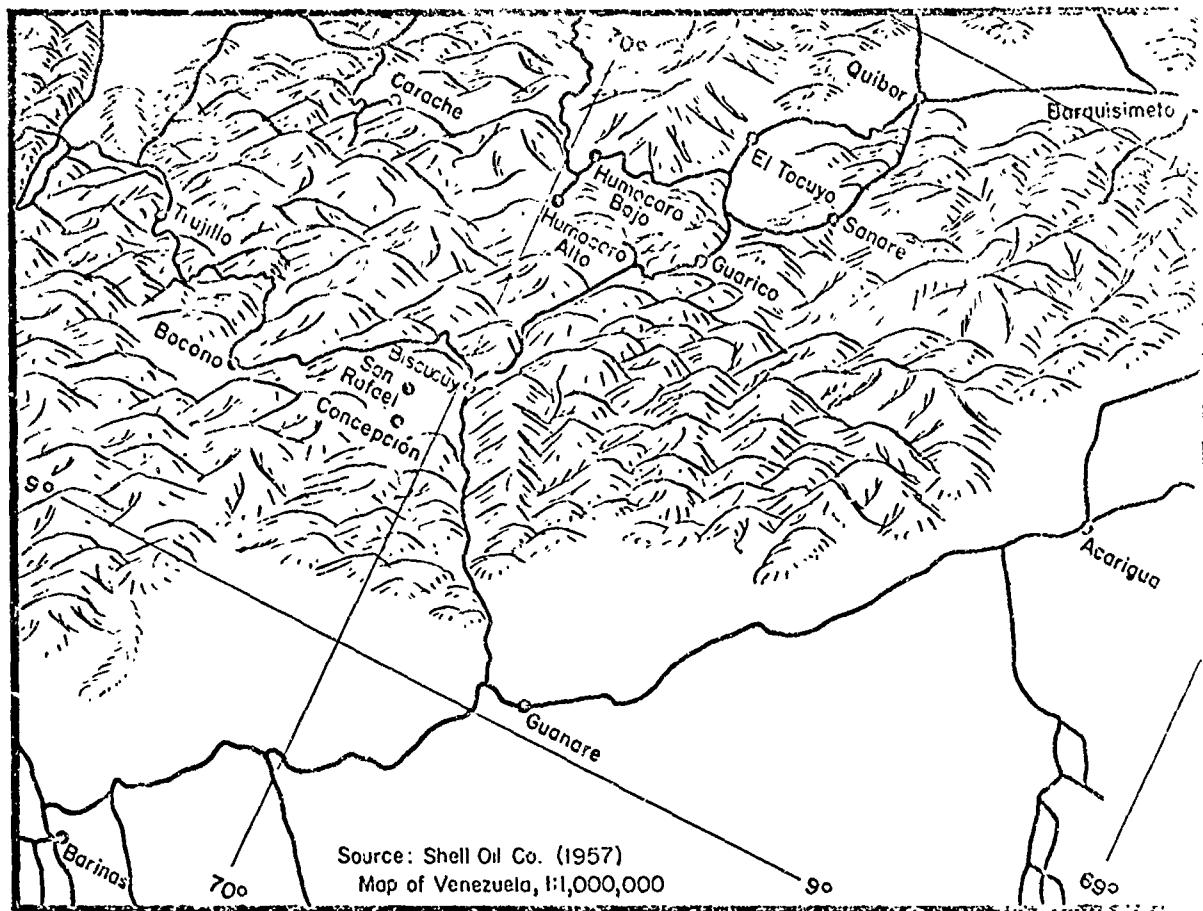
3. El Universal and El Nacional, August-October 1964, passim.

The guerrillas then refrained from offensive action for several weeks as 300 or more government forces pressed an attack which included aerial bombardment of the mountains east of Villa Nueva. On 20 December 1964 the guerrillas returned to the attack in one of the largest insurgency actions yet experienced in the El Charal region. A force of about 30 men, riding in 5 jeeps stolen from nearby farms, burst into the town of Villa Nueva and killed a policeman. They retreated down a rural road, laid an ambush, and killed the Mayor of Guarico who was leading a pursuit force. But the attack cost the guerrillas heavily. Five of their men were killed, including Carlos Luis Hernández Romero, the second-in-command to Argimiro Gabaldón.<sup>1</sup>

The attack on Villa Nueva was also related to a more serious insurgent loss. Two or three days before, according to a guerrilla deserter's account accepted as authentic by the Governor of Lara State, a dispute had broken out in a guerrilla camp over the allocation of officer ranks and as to whether the insurgents should remain on the "defensive," as ordered by the Venezuelan Communist Party, or undertake more aggressive actions. The dispute ended in a fist fight, and in the confusion a rifle went off, mortally wounding Argimiro Gabaldón. Those who demanded aggressive action took control and led the ill-fated assault on Villa Nueva.<sup>2</sup>

With the death of Gabaldón, direction of his band reportedly passed to José Manuel Linares, a native of the mountains south of Guarico and Sanare. Command of Hernández Romero's band was said to have passed to a female guerrilla named Sofía, a native of Caracas. Army and police forces were searching for these groups in the mountains as of end 1964.<sup>3</sup>

1. El Nacional, El Universal, and La Republica, 21-24 December 1964.
2. El Nacional, 24 December 1964. The Venezuelan Communist Party acknowledged Argimiro Gabaldón's "accidental death" in a message of condolence to his father, General José Rafael Gabaldón.
3. El Nacional, 19 and 24 December 1964.



### **MAP I, The El Choral Guerrilla Zone**

## Chapter 14

### MILITARY ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS

Military anti-guerrilla operations in Falcón and El Charal have been shrouded in considerable official secrecy and a general prohibition on newspaper publication of data on troop movements. Sufficient information has appeared in the Caracas press, however, to permit some tentative judgments as to the manner in which the Venezuelan Army has responded to the most significant Castro-Communist guerrilla threats which have appeared in the hemisphere since the Cuban Revolution. It is possible also to point to a number of operational problems encountered by the Army's anti-guerrilla forces which may be of interest to military planners and amenable to R&D solution.

#### Initial Operational Factors

Venezuelan military operations against the Castro-Communist guerrillas of Falcón and El Charal have followed a sequence which to some observers is disturbingly reminiscent of Cuban military operations against Fidel Castro's forces in the Sierra Maestra. When the guerrillas first appeared in Falcón and El Charal (early 1962), they suffered a number of severely damaging defeats at the hands of small Venezuelan Army and National Guard units. But the military did not press its initial attacks to a conclusion: instead of bringing in the larger forces needed for thorough mop-up operations, it allowed a situation to develop in which the surviving guerrillas in Falcón and El Charal avoided contact with government patrols and spent many months quietly reorganizing and consolidating their positions. As a result, when the Venezuelan Army finally introduced forces of battalion size in Falcón (1963-1964) and El Charal (1964), it was unable to come to decisive grips with guerrillas who had been given ample time to reconnoiter local terrain and create bases of support among local population groups.

According to one Caracas newspaper, which professed to speak for a substantial part of Venezuelan public opinion, the Army's failure to finish off the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas in 1962, using as many personnel as the task required, was proof of "culpable indifference" to the seriousness of the guerrilla threat.<sup>1</sup> In reality, the military may have had several good reasons not to send large forces into Falcón and El Charal during the initial months of guerrilla operations.

1. Strategic considerations. In the early months of 1962, when guerrillas first appeared in Falcón and El Charal, the Castro-Communist insurgents in Venezuela were engaged in a master plan for "rapid victory" through a combination of rural guerrilla warfare, urban insurgency, and revolts by military garrisons won over to the rebel cause. As part of the insurgent strategy, guerrillas were sent during early 1962 into six other mountain regions of Venezuela besides Falcón and El Charal. Two of the military garrison revolts for which the insurgents hoped actually materialized: one at Carúpano (May 1962), the other at Puerto Cabello (June 1962).<sup>2</sup>

The Venezuelan Government knew of the insurgent plan at least as early as April 1962. It is probable that this foreknowledge influenced the military decision not to commit large forces to the Falcón and El Charal guerrilla zones in 1962, so as to maintain available forces in readiness for more serious insurgency outbreaks in other parts of Venezuela.

2. Military quality factors. Two forces were theoretically available for large-scale operations against the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas: the all-volunteer National Guard (9,000) and the predominantly conscript Venezuelan Army (16,000). The Guard is routinely engaged in a multitude of necessary internal security duties and cannot be diverted, in strength, to

1. La Esfera, 6 February 1963.
2. See above, Chapter 2, for a description of the "rapid victory" strategy and of its implementation by the Castro-Communist insurgents.

the anti-guerrilla task without prejudice to the performance of its other missions.<sup>1</sup> The responsibility for mounting large-scale operations in Falcón and El Charal thus fell to the Army, with additional support from the Air Force and Marine infantry.

The Venezuelan Army as of 1962 was still recuperating from the low technical standards to which its forces were allowed to fall during the eight-year regime of the dictator, Pérez Jiménez (1950-1958).<sup>2</sup> It is known, for example, that the Army fired its artillery for the first time in five years during 1962.<sup>3</sup> As part of its self-improvement efforts, the Army also instituted in 1961 its first training courses for officers and men in unconventional warfare. But these programs did not begin to mature until April 1962, when the first group of Army officers specially trained in anti-guerrilla operations graduated from the Infantry School at Caracas.<sup>4</sup>

A confidential memorandum prepared in 1962 by the military intelligence service (SIFA) of the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense may therefore have summed up the military quality factors which inhibited the Venezuelan Army from taking more vigorous initial action against the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas. The memorandum stated that the Armed Forces were adequate as regards numbers for their counterinsurgency missions, but that they lacked training and appropriate organization.<sup>5</sup>

3. Army-civilian relations. The Venezuelan Army also had to consider, before undertaking any large-scale operations in Falcón and El Charal, the unfavorable image of itself which existed in the minds of the local populations. During the 1920's both guerrilla regions had been the scene of

1. See above, Chapter 11.

2. Alexander, The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution, 1964, p. 107.

3. Statement of Col. F. E. Burdell, Chief of U.S. Military Mission, Caracas, in mimeographed minutes of a Stanford University conference on Latin American military elites, April 1963, p. 95.

4. El Universal, 14 April 1962.

5. Quoted in La Esfera, 31 May 1964.

uprisings against the Venezuelan dictator, Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935). The rebellions were led by the father and the uncle of two of the Castro- Communist guerrilla leaders: Argimiro Gabaldón and Domingo Urbina. Each uprising was crushed by the Venezuelan Army with the savagely punitive measures which Gómez customarily employed to put down rebellions and to teach a lesson to populations in rebel regions.<sup>1</sup>

Memories of the Gómez era, and of the Army's role as the dictator's instrument of terror, were still strong in the Falcón and El Charal regions as of 1962.<sup>2</sup> This circumstance seems to have convinced the Army that any introduction of large occupation forces into either region would require a lengthy period of advance preparation and planning, with a view to taking all necessary steps to ensure the good discipline of personnel and to convince the local populations that the Army came as a friend and no longer as an agent of repression and terror.<sup>3</sup>

1. The prison tortures and other sufferings of the rebels captured in the 1929 El Charal uprising are described in Thomas Rourke, Gómez: Tyrant of the Andes, New York: William Morrow, 1936, p. 243. For a general description of the savage counterinsurgency measures employed by Gómez see Mariano Picon-Salas et al., Venezuela independiente, 1810-1960, Caracas: Fundación Eugenio Mendoza, 1962, pp. 148-149.
2. The terrified reactions of many Falcón mountaineers when the first large Army anti-guerrilla force entered the region in January 1963 are described later in this chapter. A newspaper despatch from El Charal indicates that fear of the Army was also strong in this region, since a local commander found it advisable to use loudspeaker trucks as a means of informing the population not to be alarmed, that the only purpose of the troops was to protect their lives and property. El Nacional, 22 September 1962.
3. The Venezuelan military's recognition of the need to achieve a better public image of itself in the counterinsurgency fight was indicated by the following passage from an internal Armed Forces memorandum of 1962: "It is imperative that we permeate the population with the fact that the Armed Forces are not repressive instruments but efficient collaborators towards the solution of the problems of the civil community. The Armed Forces are an integral part of the mainstream of civilian life and cannot, at any moment, turn against civilians. The democratic Armed Forces are not the arbiters of ideological polemics, but the base of legal stability, of constitutional stability. Once the Institution [i.e., the Armed Forces] is converted into an instrument which in a certain sense is pedagogic, the Nation can rest assured that its Armed Forces do not constitute an instrument of its vassalage." Quoted in La Esfera, 31 May 1964.

### Anti-Guerrilla Strategy

The failure of the Venezuelan Army to eliminate the Falcón and El Charal guerrillas in 1962, as also its failure to accomplish the same object with larger forces in 1963-1964, must also be related to its choice of an anti-guerrilla strategy. Basically, the Army had the choice between three approaches which may be employed when a government is obliged to undertake anti-guerrilla operations:

1. Area clearance — operations designed to exterminate guerrillas by resettling the civilian populations from which they draw support. E.g., Malaya.

2. Fighting the guerrillas — mounting military, including police, operations against the guerrillas while ignoring or taking punitive action against civilian populations suspected of collaboration with the insurgents. E.g., Cuba.

3. "Stealing their thunder" — taking psychological, economic, and social actions designed to draw civilian support away from the insurgents, accompanied by combat operations against active guerrillas. This last strategy makes it difficult for military forces to eliminate guerrillas altogether, since it obliges the military to respect the human and civic rights of the civilian populations from which guerrillas draw support. But the strategy can render the guerrilla movement increasingly futile and obsolete. E.g., Magsaysay's operation against the Philippine Huks.<sup>1</sup>

The anti-guerrilla strategy of the Venezuelan Army lies essentially within the third, or "stealing their thunder," category. As such, it has placed

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1. The three basic approaches to anti-guerrilla war described above are borrowed and adapted from Charles T. Bohannan, "Antiguerrilla Operations," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, May 1962, pp. 19-29. Bohannan lists a fourth possible approach to anti-guerrilla war: surrender.

primary emphasis on gaining the support of civilian populations in the Falcon and El Charal guerrilla zones, secondary though related emphasis on the task of physically exterminating the insurgents.<sup>1</sup>

The Venezuelan Army's anti-guerrilla strategy also appears to incorporate four basic principles of action:

1. Establishment of good relations between Army and civilian populations in guerrilla regions as an essential first step in anti-guerrilla operations.

2. Application of Civic Action for the purpose of "increasing the support, loyalty, and respect of the people for the military forces and the government which they represent."<sup>2</sup>

3. Legal and humane treatment of captured guerrillas and civilian collaborators.

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1. So far as is known, the Venezuelan military has not issued a public definition of its anti-guerrilla strategy. The primary emphasis on gaining local population support in the guerrilla zones may be inferred, however, from the character of its operations and also from public comments of high military officials. E.g., the following statement of a Minister of Defense: "The action of the National Armed Forces at all times has been, and will be, pointed towards the direct and efficacious protection of the Venezuelan peasant, his children, and his relatives, as well as of his fields and flocks, which constitute all his patrimony and all his wealth in the national soil." Quoted in La Esfera, 19 November 1964.
  2. "A mission of primordial importance awaits the Armed Forces: that of rescuing the rural sector from its misery, of liberating the countryside from the anguish that weighs upon its people, of guaranteeing through the cooperation of the civil government the construction of dwellings, roads, bridges, etc. This function of the Armed Forces was contemplated during the Inter-American Conference of Armies, held in Panama in 1961, when it was agreed to carry out this plan under the name 'Civic Action.' But we prefer to call it 'Social Action,' since we consider it 'a preventive measure against insurrection' because its principal objective is to help the population of the villages and rural regions to improve their condition of life and to alleviate their problems, to the end of increasing the support, loyalty, and respect of the people for the military forces and the government which they represent." Venezuelan Armed Forces internal memorandum, dated 1962, and quoted in La Esfera, 31 May 1964.

4. Development of anti-guerrilla combat operations in a manner consistent with the quality, skill, etc., of available military forces.

The application of these four principles may be seen in the first major anti-guerrilla operation conducted by the Venezuelan Army: the Falcón campaign of early 1963. The same principles were apparently applied also in the first major El Charal anti-guerrilla operations (early 1964), but cannot be traced out to the same detail because of lack of information.

#### The First Falcón Campaign

On 15 January 1963 an Army force estimated in the Venezuelan press to number as many as 3,000 men moved into the Falcón guerrilla zone from garrisons in the nearby cities of Barquisimeto and Coro. The officer in command of the operation was Lt. Col. Jorge E. Osorio-García, attached to III Division headquarters in Barquisimeto. His troops consisted mainly of young conscripts who were receiving their first taste of guerrilla warfare.<sup>1</sup>

Army-Civilian Relations. As the large Army force entered the Falcón mountains, it encountered a terrified peasantry convinced by its memories of the Gómez era and by guerrilla propaganda that the Army had come on a punitive mission. In the words of Lt. Col. Osorio-García: "At first they [the mountaineers] were reactionary. This was because they thought that we — the military — were going to cut off heads and commit atrocities."<sup>2</sup>

But the Army, as earlier indicated, was proceeding along counter-insurgency lines entirely opposed to those thought appropriate under the dictator Gómez. According to a press interview with Lt. Col. Osorio-García: "The Chief of Operations explained that in the area now under military occupation, they were utilizing a doctrine different from that employed in earlier epochs.

1. Ei Nacional, 22 January 1963.

2. La Esfera, 12 February 1963. The popular fear of the Army is also noted in other contemporary newspaper despatches filed from the Falcon guerrilla zone.

Previously, they believed that it was the Army which must be feared, not the guerrillas or bandits. At present, the new [counterinsurgency] technique proclaimed the complete opposite: 'We must capture or destroy the active guerrilla, but we must win the population to our side, as well as the collaborators and the passive guerrillas.'<sup>1</sup>

In keeping with its new counterinsurgency doctrine, the Army seems to have insisted on good discipline among its troops and courteous behavior on all occasions towards the Falcón mountain populations. A newspaper report noted that soldiers formally asked permission from family heads before they made house-to-house searches in the mountain villages.<sup>2</sup> Another report describes them as speaking in "very friendly and cordial terms" to the son of a local farmer.<sup>3</sup> The Army also avoided interference with normal agricultural and grazing activities in the guerrilla zone.<sup>4</sup>

The Army's presence, however, inevitably led to some inconveniences for the Falcón mountaineers, particularly when roadblocks and search points were set up in an effort to intercept food and other supplies destined for the guerrillas. But even here, the government forces did not carry their vigilance to the point of arresting persons on the mere suspicion that they were guerrilla supply agents. The policy was explained by Lt. Col. Osorio-García as follows: "We are controlling the movement of provisions, but we do it in a rational way, as we do in the case of medicines. We consider that a person who has two penicillin capsules will use them in his home, etc., but if we see 50 containers of this product or of some other, then we keep watch on this person, with the result that he also is careful."<sup>5</sup>

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1. La Esfera, 12 February 1963.
  2. El Nacional, 23 January 1963.
  3. El Nacional, 12 February 1963.
  4. El Universal, 24 January and 1 February 1963.
  5. La Esfera, 12 February 1963.

Charges that the Army was undertaking repressive action against innocent Falcón mountaineers were nonetheless raised in Caracas by a deputy to the National Congress. His accusations were denied by the head of the Falcón Campesino Federation and by the Minister of Interior Relations, both of whom toured the guerrilla zone in early 1963. The Minister asserted that the Army presence in the mountains had proven to be a "positive experience" for both the military and the civilian population. He cited as proof of mutually good relations the petition of a Falcón village for a permanent Army garrison.<sup>1</sup>

Civic Action. The Army initiated Civic Action measures in the Falcón mountains within a few days after the arrival of its occupation force. The purpose of the program was described by an officer of the Army General Staff as follows: "The Army is studying and has initiated activities in Falcón which are independent of the persecution of the guerrillas. It believes that popular education, and the solution of problems which seemingly are minor but are of great importance in peasant life, are the best weapons to combat the deplorable activities of those ambitious persons who rebel against the legitimate government and attempt to drag the peasantry into their absurd adventure."<sup>2</sup>

1. El Nacional, 18 and 19 March 1963. The testimony of the head of the Falcón Campesino Federation was as follows: "In my constant visits to the peasant regions of Churuguara, Santa Cruz de Bucaral, Maparari, El Tuy, Tapatapa, La Taza, San Luis, Hueques, La Caridad, etc., the peasants carry out their work in the most complete normality. They have not presented denunciations of any kind of abuse; very much to the contrary, they feel protected and benefited by the presence of detachments of government forces, which has already removed the danger of the outlaws." El Universal, 23 February 1963.
2. El Universal, 26 February 1963. The importance which the Army attached to Civic Action was also indicated in a press interview with Lt. Col. Osorio-Garcia: "He added that it was an error to believe that the guerrillas could be finished off only by sending in soldiers and military: 'It is necessary to use Civic Action on the population, and of this we have already thought seriously.'" La Esfera, 12 February 1963.

Three types of Civic Action were introduced. Army officers and enlisted men, previously trained for the task, opened literacy classes and gave instruction in agricultural techniques. The Army's Medical-Dental Service brought in mobile units to visit mountain villages outside the effective reach of the Public Health Service. Army Engineers began construction of rural aqueducts, bridges, and penetration roads as both a Civic Action measure and to facilitate military anti-guerrilla operations.<sup>1</sup>

The Civic Action program was also notable in that it continued in operation after the Army completed its first Falcón campaign in June 1963 and withdrew the bulk of its forces from the mountains. The program also lost its exclusively military character and became a combined operation of the Army; the Falcón State Government; the Diocese of Coro; the Ministries of Public Works, Education, and Health; the National Institutes of Sports, Agriculture, and Sanitary Works; the Corporation for Electrical Administration and Development; and the Shell and Creole Oil Companies.<sup>2</sup>

Treatment of Guerrillas and Collaborators. From the outset of their operations against Castro-Communist guerrillas in various parts of the country, the Venezuelan Army and National Guard have emphasized legal and humane treatment of captured guerrillas, treating them as prisoners of war and allowing them to be represented by counsel in trials before military courts. As of early 1963, however, the population in the Falcón mountains

1. El Nacional, 7 February 1963; El Universal, 26 February 1963.
2. El Universal, 15 July 1964. Civic Action has been employed in the El Charal guerrilla zone in much the same manner as in Falcón. The first large Army unit which moved into the area in late 1962 brought mobile medical-dental units and distributed food, medicines, and 3,000 articles of clothing. Civic Action has continued in 1963-1964 and comprehends two types of operations: "Civic Action" in which the military works for the population by building roads; "Community Action" in which the military works with the population on local improvement projects such as construction of schools, remodeling of public squares, establishment of sport clubs, and organization of community festivities. El Universal, 27 October 1962; La Esfera, 11 and 23 April 1964.

had little opportunity to judge for itself how the military would deal with captured guerrillas. The need for a demonstration was critical in one Falcón region where the guerrilla commander, Domingo Urbina, had put together an insurgent force of 25-50 men consisting mainly of adolescents recruited from local mountaineer families.<sup>1</sup>

The Army met the problem by establishing separate procedures for dealing with three categories of captured insurgents: adult guerrillas, juvenile guerrillas under 18 years of age, and guerrilla collaborators. It announced that adult guerrillas were subject to the full rigors of the law.<sup>2</sup> Juvenile guerrillas were to be dealt with leniently, although it is not clear what "leniently" meant. Guerrilla collaborators were set free after interrogation, with a warning that they would be kept under special surveillance.<sup>3</sup>

In adopting this policy, particularly as regards guerrilla collaborators, the Army was probably motivated as of early 1963 by its desire to foster good relations with the Falcón population and to avoid any suspicion that it had come into the mountains as an essentially punitive force. In its more recent Falcón anti-guerrilla operations (late 1964), the Army has changed its policy and arrested hundreds of known or suspected guerrilla collaborators.<sup>4</sup>

Combat Operations. Army combat operations in the first Falcón campaign cannot be described in detail because of the censorship imposed on

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1. La Esfera, 12 February 1963.
  2. This did not mean, however, that any of the adult guerrillas were to be executed. The death penalty is specifically prohibited by the Venezuelan Constitution, and the prohibition has been observed by the Venezuelan Government, with the result that contemporary Venezuela is one of the rare countries that has experienced prolonged revolutionary violence and yet has never executed an insurgent prisoner.
  3. La Esfera, 12 February 1963.
  4. El Nacional, 23 November 1964.

reports of troop movements. In general, it appears that the Army first spent at least two weeks (15-31 January 1963) establishing itself in the mountain villages and setting up base camps. It then threw siege lines around the known or suspected guerrilla refuge areas in a futile attempt to starve the insurgents out. This action was accompanied by cautious and slow-moving patrol actions, aided by airplane and helicopter reconnaissance, into the deeper recesses of the Falcón mountains. With only a few exceptions, the guerrillas avoided encounters with the military. Army officers openly complained of the guerrillas' refusal to stand and fight.<sup>1</sup>

One Falcón guerrilla band, composed mainly of juvenile mountaineer recruits, disintegrated under the pressure of the Army advance. But the military was unable, in weeks of patrol actions, to locate the principal guerrilla leaders or their base camps. At the end of March 1963, the Army initiated "Operation Pliers." This involved the dropping of fragmentation bombs on suspected guerrilla refuge zones by Canberra bombers, followed by penetration of the bombarded areas by military patrols moving in from several directions. The guerrillas replied with derisory small arms fire from a safe distance, but eluded pursuit or capture.<sup>2</sup>

"Operation Pliers" led to discovery of a few guerrilla camps and the capture of 60 guerrilla weapons, but failed to locate the principal insurgent leaders or their hard-core followers. It also led to a virtual suspension of guerrilla activity which endured over several weeks. In June 1963, the Army withdrew from the mountains, leaving only a few small guard detachments behind.

In sum, although the conclusion must be extremely tentative because of the limited information available, the Army's combat operations in the first Falcón campaign were those of conventional military forces ill-at-ease in their first attempt at a major anti-guerrilla operation. The Army preferred

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1. El Universal, 8 February 1963.

2. El Nacional, 6 April 1963.

to keep its men in large patrol columns, and near base camps, rather than split them in more adventurous hunter-killer units. Such tactics led to Army failure in its central combat objective of locating and destroying the main Falcón guerrilla bands. On the other hand, by using only conventional tactics, the Army may well have made the best possible use of its available manpower: young conscripts who were engaging for the first time in anti-guerrilla warfare.

The effect of the 3,000 man Army deployment into Falcón as of early 1963 therefore led only to a temporary cessation of guerrilla activity in the region, which lasted only until the Army withdrew the main body of its forces in mid-June. But even this much was probably an achievement of considerable importance, for it demonstrated to a skeptical Venezuelan public that the Army could hold its own, and avoid damaging defeats, in its first major anti-guerrilla field operation.<sup>1</sup>

#### Follow-up Campaigns

The Falcón campaign of early 1963 has been followed by four other major Army field operations against Castro-Communist guerrillas in Venezuela:

1. An indication of the Venezuelan public's skepticism as to the Army's capabilities for a major field operation against the guerrillas is provided in the following newspaper editorial, printed during the early days of the first Falcón campaign: "And now begin the questions which are not only ours but are a reflection of the interrogations which the public opinion of the country is formulating every day: Are they applying the lessons learned in Panama to the anti-guerrilla fight? Do the Venezuelan soldiers sent by the Government to fight the guerrillas have all the necessary technical and human resources to triumph over the rebels? Are they laying a circle around the mountain positions occupied by the 'outlaws'? Have officers and men been sufficiently instructed that they are constantly risking their lives before the telescopic sights of their enemies and that they must overcome all obstacles to achieve victory? Have they told them to maintain an absurd war of positions or are they embarked on an even more absurd tactic that will lead them into ambushes strategically laid by the 'outlaws'? Is somebody interested in seeing that the guerrilla foci are not extinguished? Are the Minister of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Service Commanders aware that in this affair, which seems to be a training war, there are mortal risks for the officers, ranks, and soldiers of our Armed Forces whose lives are precious?" La Esfera, 6 February 1963.

one in El Charal (early 1964), one in the "El Bachiller" mountains of Miranda State (Summer 1964), and separate operations in El Charal and Falcón which began in late 1964. The most notable feature of all these operations is that the Army has moved beyond the cautious combat operations it employed in the first Falcón campaign. While retaining its emphasis on the need for good relations between the military and civilians in guerrilla zones, and the continuous application of Civic Action as a means thereto, the Army has adopted more aggressive anti-guerrilla tactics aimed not so much at avoidance of defeat as at carrying the war directly to the guerrillas.

Two factors have apparently made the new Army tactics possible. The first is that Army-civilian relations in the Falcón and El Charal guerrilla zones have probably improved to the point where, to the majority of the population, the Army is no longer a menace but an ally which can be criticized for failing to take whatever means are necessary to press the anti-guerrilla fight to a conclusion.<sup>1</sup> The result is that the Army has lately (1964) begun to employ anti-guerrilla measures of a type from which it previously refrained in Falcón and El Charal so as not to antagonize local populations. The new measures include the arrest of hundreds of guerrilla collaborators, air and artillery bombardment of guerrilla refuge zones in which peasant farms may also be located, and the evacuation of peasant families from guerrilla refuge zones.<sup>2</sup> The Army is still on record, however, as repudiating any action

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1. A newspaper report of late 1964 described military-civilian relations in a strategic Falcón mountain village in the following terms: "In some cafes, one sees many soldiers, and there is no sign of abnormality in the situation. The people are actually accustomed to the presence of troops which have practically lived among the inhabitants for almost three years." El Nacional, 23 November 1964.
  2. El Nacional and El Universal, October-November 1964, *passim*. Before one aerial bombardment, the Air Force dropped leaflets with the inscription: "People: the bandits who are hiding on your soil have made it necessary for the Armed Forces to bombard the zones in which they are located. Don't be afraid, since you should help to see that these disaffected persons are delivered up to justice." El Universal, 2 November 1964.

against civilian populations in the guerrilla zones which it considers as "repressive" rather than directed solely against the insurgents.<sup>1</sup>

The second factor which apparently has assisted the Army to undertake more aggressive action against the Castro-Communist guerrillas is the pay-off from the training courses in unconventional warfare which have been in operation since 1961. A battalion of cazadores ("hunters"), presumably similar to U. S. Army Rangers, has been established as the nucleus of the Venezuelan Army's strategic reserve and has applied during late 1964 what a Caracas newspaper described as "new anti-guerrilla tactics" in El Charal.<sup>2</sup> Some troops not actually engaged in combating guerrillas have been taken into mountain areas for realistic field training.<sup>3</sup>

The new anti-guerrilla tactics employed by the Venezuelan Army in Falcón and El Charal cannot be described in detail, because the military apparently has allowed even less newspaper coverage of its operations in the two regions during 1964 than in earlier years. The character of the new tactics can be inferred, however, from the successful military operation of July-August 1964 against a small guerrilla band which appeared in the "El Bachiller" mountains of Miranda State, about 85 road miles southeast of Caracas.<sup>4</sup>

1. In October 1964 a Deputy to the National Congress raised charges of "collective repression" against peasantry in a sector of the El Charal guerrilla zone. The Minister of Defense asserted that the charges did not relate to any action by the Army, but to the actions of other government forces (i.e., police). He also took the occasion to declare: "We are not only a repressive force. We must also exercise Civic Action in those places." El Nacional, 7 October 1964.
2. El Nacional, 5 November 1964; also Venezuela, Ministry of Defense, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 233.
3. E.g., the exercise reported in La Esfera and El Nacional, 5 December 1964.
4. The location of the "El Bachiller" guerrilla area is indicated on the fold-out map appended to Chapter 11 of this report.

The anti-guerrilla operation was divided into three phases, all described as being planned "in accordance with modern military doctrine." In the first phase, troops occupied access routes to the guerrilla refuge area and possible points of guerrilla supply. In the second phase, small penetration patrols obtained a ground fix on the guerrilla camp positions preparatory to aerial bombardment. In the third phase, troops moved in force to the bombed camps and destroyed them. The combat operations were accompanied by Civic Action measures among the local peasant population, including vaccination, medical treatment of sick children, and the free distribution of medicines and surplus Army rations.<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which the Venezuelan Army set up the "El Bachiller" operation was also of interest, as indicating the improved morale of its anti-guerrilla personnel. Although the insurgent threat was minor, selected troops were brought in from garrisons as far distant as Cumana, Barcelona, Caracas, and Maracay. The operation was officially designated as a training exercise, with an Army training officer rather than a combat officer in command. Junior officers and enlisted men who took part in the "El Bachiller" action impressed visiting newsmen by their air of confidence and determination to excel. One junior officer remarked apropos the guerrillas: "They are doing us a real favor, because we are learning more in a week right here than we could learn in a whole year in school or in the garrison."<sup>2</sup>

#### Operational Problems and Gaps

Available data indicates a number of problems and gaps in the Venezuelan military's anti-guerrilla efforts. In the case of three problems noted, the Venezuelan military has applied solutions which may also be of interest.

1. El Universal, 10 and 14 July 1964.
2. El Universal and El Nacional, 10 July 1964.

1. Civilian ID cards. Venezuelan law provides that all citizens must carry a personal ID card and produce it on official demand. In the Falcón guerrilla region, and perhaps in the El Charal region as well, many adult inhabitants of mountain villages had never bothered to apply for ID cards or had never been given adequate opportunity to obtain one. As a result, one of the factors contributing to the initial fear and distrust which the local population exhibited towards the Army was the suspicion that failure to possess an ID card might be cause for arrest as a guerrilla or guerrilla collaborator.<sup>1</sup>

The Venezuelan Service of Identification, an agency of the Ministry of Interior Relations, resolved the problem by moving mobile ID units into Falcón.<sup>2</sup> In other Latin American countries where personal ID cards are also required by law, and civilian populations in guerrilla zones may not possess them, it may be useful to attach mobile ID units to anti-guerrilla forces.

2. Water tank trucks. Many mountain villages in the Falcón and El Charal guerrilla regions are chronically short of water at certain periods of the year or rely upon dependable, but polluted, sources of water supply. The Venezuelan Army found water tank trucks useful in the Falcón region, and probably also in El Charal, as a means of relieving military pressure on local water supplies and protecting military personnel against infection from polluted water sources. The equipment also doubled as a useful piece of Civic Action equipment.<sup>3</sup>

3. Combat operations. The following problems or gaps were noted in the study of the Venezuelan Army's anti-guerrilla combat operations and techniques:

1. El Nacional, 12 February 1963.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Interior Relations, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, p. 228.
3. El Nacional, 22 January 1964, El Universal, 24 July 1964.

a. Vertical climate problems. Troops operating in the Falcón and El Charal mountains often encountered significant problems of visibility and movement in higher elevations characterized by frequent rainfall and mist. Radio communications between military base camps and advance patrols were sometimes impeded by the differences in atmospheric conditions at higher and lower altitudes.<sup>1</sup> Troops drawn from warm regions of Venezuela exhibited a dislike for operations in cold mountain regions.

These considerations suggest the possible utility of study effort that would inventory operational problems likely to be encountered in the vertical climate zones of Latin American mountain regions located in tropical and subtropical latitudes. The study could also develop recommendations as to appropriate troop training programs, troop clothing, rations, equipment, etc.

b. Field rations. Venezuelan military operations against guerrillas have been impeded by the lack of pre-packaged field rations other than high cost imported rations which the Army probably has been reluctant to expend. The Venezuelan Ministry of Defense is currently developing locally produced field rations which it estimates will be almost half the cost of imported rations and contain foods more palatable to the Venezuelan soldier.<sup>2</sup> The new rations may be of interest as a type of ration which might be locally produced in other Latin American countries which are currently dependent upon foreign sources of supply.

c. Detection. The Venezuelan military has experienced considerable difficulty in trying to locate guerrilla hideouts in limestone cavern regions (Falcón) and densely forested subtropical mountain regions (Falcón and El Charal). This suggests a need for the following:

1. E.g., El Nacional, 6 April 1963.
2. Venezuela, Ministry of Defense, Memoria y Cuenta, 1964, pp. 619-620.

(1) portable infra-red detection devices to locate guerrilla camp fires, etc.

(2) night-flying helicopters equipped with infra-red detection devices.

Also noteworthy is the failure to use dogs in tracking operations against guerrillas, even though military patrols on many occasions have occupied camps hastily vacated by guerrillas and containing personal effects of important guerrilla leaders.

d. Psychological warfare devices. There is no information to indicate that the Venezuelan military has employed specialized psychological warfare devices which might help to undermine guerrilla morale and encourage guerrilla surrenders. Useful types of devices might include canisters with safe-conduct passes, noisemakers, flares, and simulation devices.

e. Fingerprint equipment. Venezuelan military forces appear to be in need of fingerprint equipment that would enable soldiers to take quick prints of guerrillas killed in combat. At present, this task is left to police agents who sometimes journey to scenes of previous Army encounters with guerrillas, only to find that the dead insurgents have been removed by their comrades, or that their bodies have decomposed so rapidly that identification is impossible.

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The information contained in this report has been derived entirely from published materials available in the Washington, D. C. area. The principal data sources, as the footnotes to the various chapters indicate, were Caracas newspapers and the annual reports of the Venezuelan Ministry of Interior Relations. The research effort also extended to the articles on Venezuela published in the New York Times and the Washington Post, as well as pertinent books and magazine articles.

The newspaper most heavily relied upon for day-to-day coverage of insurgency and pre-insurgency events in Venezuela was El Universal, which was researched for the entire period 1960-1964. It is a mildly conservative paper, which emphasizes straight factual reporting of the news and seldom runs a feature article of any length or consequence. El Universal was the founder of Informaciones Nacionales (INNAC), a press service which gathers news from the interior of the country and now serves other Caracas newspapers as well. A daily issue of El Universal runs from 50 to 80 pages.

La Esfera was consulted for the period 1962-1964. It is currently a more conservative paper than El Universal and is not nearly as large. It is chiefly valuable for its occasional feature articles on the Castro-Communist insurgency. For day-to-day coverage of events in the interior of the country, it relies on the INNAC despatches, and prints less of them than El Universal.

The newspaper with the greatest circulation in Venezuela is El Nacional, which has almost as many pages as El Universal. It has extensive national coverage of its own and does not rely upon the INNAC service. El Nacional has gone through a marked change of editorial policy in recent years: it was much given to printing articles by Communist and extreme Left-wing authors in 1958-1962, but adopted a center-of-the-road position early in 1963 after it ran into financial difficulties caused by an advertisers' boycott organized by political conservatives. El Nacional was consulted in depth only for the years 1963-1964 because earlier issues were usually unobtainable.

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The annual reports of the Venezuelan Ministry of Interior Relations contain the many communiqües issued by the Ministry and the security police (DIGEPOL), as well as other valuable data on insurgency developments. The annual reports of the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense provided almost no data of value.

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